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THE LIFE OF
MADAME DE LA ROCHEJAQUELEIN

THE MARQUISE DE LA ROCHEJAQUELEIN.

Frontispiece.

The Life of Madame de la Rochejaquelein

BY

THE HON. MRS. MAXWELL SCOTT

AUTHOR OF "THE TRAGEDY OF FOTHERINGAY"
"MME. ELIZABETH DE FRANCE," ETC.

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"Les femmes rivalisaient d'héroisme avec les hommes: nulpart peut-être, par la foi, la douleur, l'amour, la pitié, ne fut plus remarquable cette influence de la femme dans toutes les affaires de ce monde."—DE CHATEAUBRIAND.

ROYAL ASIA

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAP

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ERRATA.

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,, 6, l. 22: *for* Tureau *read* Turreau.
,, 10, l. 1: *insert* , *after* story.
,, 18-20: *for* Citron *read* Citran.
,, 21, l. 17: *for* Victoire *read* Victorine.
,, 31, l. 21: *for* in to *read* into.
,, 32, note: *for* Bethuam *read* Betham.
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,, 40, l. 18: *delete* as.
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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

"Ce que les *Croisades* avaient été pour la noblesse chevaleresque et guerrière de l'époque féodale, *La Vendée* fut pour le peuple catholique." —DE PONTMARTIN.

"Elle se grave dans l'histoire comme une protestation immortelle contre les persécuteurs et les bourreaux; elle fait luire dans les ténèbres révolutionnaires, quelque chose de pareil à ces lampes que les prémiers chrétiens allumaient dans les catacombes; elle se détache grandiose et avec des proportions épiques sur le fond sinistre et bas de la Terreur."—ERNEST DAUDET.

IT is a consoling thought that in the midst of the tragedy and horrors of the French Revolution many heroic lives and deeds shine out in the gloom of that dark period of history, and that women were privileged to distinguish themselves in a special manner by their unselfish devotion to duty.

Among those who ran no common risks by their loyalty to the cause of their King and of religion Madame de la Rochejaquelein, whose life we are about to relate, occupies an illustrious place as one of the chief heroines of the War of La Vendée, prolific as that war was in heroic men and women. It is now far more than "sixty years since" that the English translation of Mme. de la Rochejaquelein's *Mémoires* was published, with a Preface by Sir Walter Scott. The authoress was then alive, and lived for many years afterwards, and we wonder

whether she ever saw the words written about her at Abbotsford in 1826, some of which we may perhaps be permitted to quote here.

After a short historical survey of the war, and after drawing a very interesting comparison between the rising in La Vendée and that of the Highlanders under Montrose, Sir Walter continues: "The accomplished and amiable authoress of the following Memoirs was born and bred up in the precincts of a Court, yet writes with the virtuous simplicity and quiet dignity of a Matron of Rome. Her style is entirely free from a species of literary coquetry that is sometimes to be found in the very best species of French composition, which is generally more marked by ingenuity than by simplicity. Her person was always delicate and so feminine as to seem incapable of sustaining the personal difficulties and privations in which she was involved, and which the manner she was bred up in must have rendered less endurable. She was herself sensible of this, and said to an English lady who had been anxious to be introduced to so celebrated a person: 'You must allow you expected to see something more like a heroine.' Her character in private life was, as might have been expected from the pure and virtuous style of her writings, totally unblemished."[1]

Sir Walter seems to have had no doubt that the *Mémoires* were entirely from the pen of Mme. de la Rochejaquelein, but we must here allude to the con-

[1] "Memoirs of the Marchioness de la Rochejaquelein." (Constable's *Miscellany*, vol. v., Edinburgh 1827.)

troversy which exists regarding this fact. It is contended that the book, as a whole, is the work of M. de Barante, to whom the writer confided her notes and the first chapters of the *Mémoires* for revision. It seems useless to enter into a lengthy discussion of this matter. If M. de Barante re-cast the work in a more literary form, it was with the approval and co-operation of Mme. de la Rochejaquelein herself. To us the style appears to be that of a woman; but in either case, to use the words of Mme. de la Rochejaquelein's latest French editors, "Nearly half a century has passed since she died, and her renown will lose nothing by the truth being known. She is certain to live in the memory of mankind by the heroic part she played by the side of de Lescure in the great war and for the tragedy of her life as Wife and Mother. In comparison with this, an uncertain fame as an authoress is of small value."[1]

Sir Walter speaks of Mme. de la Rochejaquelein's delicacy and feminine appearance, and the fact which often appears in her history, that she was naturally very timid and fearful, lends an additional note to the admiration we feel for her courage during hardships and terrors which were sufficient to try the bravest men. Like so many of her friends in France at that time, who went to death with entire calmness and heroism, our heroine led an existence of continual danger and hair-breadth escapes with a cheerful equanimity it would be difficult to emulate. It is a

[1] Preface to *Mémoires de Mme. de la Rochejaquelein*, ed. by Maurice Vitrac and Arnould Galopin.

little puzzling to the reader that the writer of the *Mémoires* must be called by the name of her second husband, whereas throughout the most interesting portion of her life we know her as Mme. de Lescure; and it is under that name that we must follow her adventures in La Vendée.

As the full history of the Rising can be read elsewhere, we will here follow Mme. de la Rochejaquelein's descriptions of what she saw and heard—testimony which is confirmed by that of M. de Barante. As she says very modestly: "I do not write the history of the Revolution. I merely relate the small number of circumstances which passed before my eyes, or were in some way connected with me. They interest those who care for me, and may be curious for those who are already acquainted with the great events and desire to know the small details."

For the convenience of the reader, however, we will briefly recall the chief measures taken by the Republican Government once the rising of La Vendée became a recognised fact, until the close of that part of the *Mémoires* which are connected with it. For this purpose the testimony of M. Clémanceau, a moderate Republican, an eye-witness of the war and at one time a prisoner in the Vendean Army, will be useful.[1]

It seems that for a month after the first rising, the Convention paid no attention to the matter at Saint Florent. In 1793 "The National Convention occupied by its own divisions did not know that La Vendée

[1] *Histoire de la Guerre de La Vendée* (1793-1815), par Joséph Clémanceau.

existed"; a small body of gendarmes tried to oppose the royalists' march on Chemillé and Chalonnes-sur-Loire, but they were soon dispersed. About the 15th of April the first Republican troops were sent under the command of Generals Berruyer and Leigonyer and the National Guard of Nantes under General Gauvilliers, but as our historian says, "six times the number of men were required to surround the royalists at that moment." After the Vendean victory at Fontenay in May, 1793, the Government "opened its eyes" and realised that the war in La Vendée was a serious matter and required prompt remedies. It therefore made some attempt to meet the danger, but it was, in truth, in difficulties of its own. Marseilles was in rebellion, Lyons was organising a loyal army, and the united armies of Europe were menacing the very existence of France. "The National Convention instead of sending forces capable of crushing La Vendée, and especially brave and experienced generals to command them, tried to conquer the unhappy country by means of Decrees.

"One was published at this time of which the extravagance was a dishonour to its framers. It decreed that the men, houses, towns, villages, forests, scattered trees, of La Vendée were to be utterly destroyed or burnt, and that the women and children should be carried off as hostages to another part of France." [Decree of 1st August, 1793.] Many of the cities were of course fully garrisoned, and after the Vendean victory at Saumur, General Biron, who was in command of 16,000 to 18,000 men at Niort, sent out a detachment of 6,000 men under General Westermann,

whose name often occurs in the *Mémoires*, to attack the Vendeans. To his troops belongs the unenviable renown of being the first to light the incendiary fires which were eventually to devastate the whole country.

In September a new effort was made by the Convention, and the body of troops, afterwards too well known in the chronicles of the war as the *Mayençais*, were sent to the scene of action. These men had formed the garrison of Mayence, when the town had capitulated in the previous year and were under a pledge not to be sent against the Allies for two years. They were all old and tried soldiers. As is said in the *Mémoires*, pp. 183-4, it was considered a special grievance by the Royalists that troops of this kind should be sent against them, but as will also be seen the Vendeans found themselves able to cope with the *Mayençais*, particularly on the occasion of the battle of Torfou.

After the fatal defeat of the Royalists at Savenay in October, 1793, the next great and sinister event was the appearance in the following year of General Tureau as Commander-in-Chief in the West, but the account of his terrible method of warfare will be found in its proper place, and as Mme. de Lescure's connection with the Royalist Army ends in the same year her narrative of the war here also closes.

The *Souvenirs* of another heroine of the Vendée, Mme. de Bouëre—a friend of Mme. de la Rochejaquelein, and called by the latter her "Comrade,"—and other similar Reminiscences, serve to complete and illustrate the narrative given in the *Mémoires*.[1]

[1] *La Guerre de La Vendée—Souvenirs de La Comtesse de La Bouëre*: Paris, E. Plon-Nourrit et Cie. 1890.

Mme. de Bouëre and the other ladies, although not so well known in history as their friend, were equally courageous in the terrible circumstances that surrounded them, and, no less heroic, and indeed often martyrs to their zeal, the peasant women and young girls of La Vendée also assisted the cause in every possible way, even at times joining the combatants. "The three great rôles played by the Vendean women and which they filled with admirable heroism were to pray, to fight, to die."

While the men went out to battle the women prayed aloud, kneeling by the hedges or in the narrow lanes of the *Bocage*. At night they often assembled in the churches to say the Rosary together to the sound of cannon. At the first sound of firing they would begin to pray; the men, encouraged by the sight, went forth to fight with chivalrous fervour, and if perchance panic seized them the women would rush forward to urge them to victory. In thinking of these brave women we may echo the words of one of their compatriots. "There is in the heart of every French woman something of Joan of Arc. She and her sisters feel, thrill, and vibrate in union"; and certainly The Maid would have blessed and encouraged the unselfish devotion to Faith and King that characterised her countrymen of La Vendée.

Sur leur bannière bien gardée
Inscrivons, en allant au feu,
Ces mots: Jeanne d'Arc et Vendée,
Autrement dit: La France et Dieu.

—Victor de Laprade.

AUTHORITIES FOR LIFE OF MME. DE LA ROCHEJAQUELEIN.

1. Vie de La Marquise de la Rochejaquelein. Par Alfred Nettement. Paris 1876.

2. Mémoires de La Marquise de la Rochejaquelein. Ed. by Maurice Vitrac et Arnould Galopin. Paris. Albin Michel, Editeur.

3. Oraison Funèbre sur Mme. de la Rochejaquelein. Par S. E. Cardinal Pie.

4. Mémoire de Cardinal Pie à la Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest. 1868–1869.

5. Souvenirs de La Comtesse de La Bouëre, publiés par sa Belle-fille. Paris, Plon-Nourrit, 1890.

6. Mémoires de La Marquise de Bonchamps. Ed. par La Comtesse de Genlis. Paris 1827.

7. Mémoires de Madame de Sapinaud. (Mémoires sur La Vendée.) Paris 1823.

8. Un Vendéen sous La Terreur. (Mémoires inédits de Toussaint Ambroise de La Cartrie. Préface par Frédéric Masson.) Paris MDCCCX.

9. Etudes d'Âmes. Par E. Terrade. Paris 1906.

10. Mesdames de France. Stryenski. 1910.

11. Histoire de la Guerre de La Vendée. (1793–1815.) Par Joseph Clémanceau. (Paris, Nouvelle Libraire Nationale, 85 Rue de Rennes. 1909.)

CHAPTER I.

YOUTH AT COURT.

In the short autobiography which accompanies her *Mémoires* Madame de la Rochejaquelein says, "I was born at Versailles on October 25th, 1772. My grandmother, Mme. la Duchesse de Civrac was Lady in Waiting to Madame Victoire, daughter of Louis XV.; my grandfather had filled several posts as Ambassador. He it was who was sent to Vienna to espouse, in the name of the Dauphin, the unhappy Marie Antoinette. He was Chevalier of Honour to Madame Victoire, and possessed the Cordon Bleu.[1] He had had four children. The Duc de Lorges, whose wife was Lady in Waiting to Mme. la Comtesse d'Artois; Mme. la Marquise de Lescure, who died when her only son was born, six years before my birth; Mme. la Marquise de Donnissan, my mother, Woman in Waiting to Madame Victoire. M. de Donnissan was in waiting on Monsieur; finally Mme. de Chastellux, waiting woman to Madame Victoire." "I go into these details," she adds, "to show how agreeably the first portion of my life must have passed, and what a happy future, it seemed, I could promise myself. All this is now

[1] The order of the Saint Esprit.

so far distant that, in spite of my story no one can imagine how happy my childhood was.

I was an only daughter and adored by my mother, who would never consent to be separated from me. We lived with my grandmother; our family was rich, numerous, and powerful at Versailles, as may be seen. No misunderstandings came to trouble the union of its members; each one was full of affection and attentions for me. My cousins, the de Lorges, were at school; Mme. de Chastellux's children were put out to nurse—all the family attention was centred on me." The author omits to give her baptismal names, which were Marie Louise Victorine, and she was called by the last. The happy days she speaks of were spent in delightful company by the little Victorine. Mme. de Civrac was "full of wit and grace," and the gentle charm of her character and that of Mme. de Donnissan drew to her circle all that was best of Court Society. On Sundays and Tuesdays, the days on which the King "received," Mme. de Civrac's rooms were crowded. The little court of Madame Victoire, which was open to these ladies, offered likewise a very pleasant society in which the royal lady by her kindness and simplicity tried to make her high rank forgotten.

In such surroundings our heroine passed the first fourteen years of her life, but she confesses with regret that, as was most natural, she had only a confused remembrance of all the great and famous people—Princes, Ministers, Ambassadors—she met at her grandmother's during these years. One circumstance, however, remained vividly in

her mind; this was the arrest of the Cardinal de Rohan at the time of the incident of the Diamond Necklace. He had been an habitué of Mme. de Civrac's *Salon*. One day when Victorine was nine years old a message was brought to Mme. de Donnissan to say that a sentinel had been stationed at the Cardinal's door and that two guards were bringing him back from the King's apartments, where he had been arrested. "I went outside," says Mme. de la Rochejaquelein, "and passing down the chapel gallery in which he, as well as my grandmother, had their rooms, I saw the Cardinal coming preceded by two servants and a private of the *Garde du Corps*. He was on his way to the Bastille, and bowed with a calm and fairly noble manner to the crowd which had assembled to see him pass."

At the end of those fourteen years Mme. de Civrac died, and her husband and son followed her to the grave. Mme. de Donnissan was quite prostrated by these sad losses and became subject to severe fainting fits and nervous attacks. Change of scene being recommended, she, accompanied by her husband and daughter and several members of her family went to Switzerland. The visit lasted for five months, but owing to Mme. de Donnissan's state of health it was a dreary time. "Never was journey sadder," says our heroine, and the only thing she recalled with interest was a visit to Cagliostro at Brientz. She and her father found him "short, fat and dark, but with a fine face, and his wife, who was gentle and amiable, was, although it was only eight in the morning, dressed in a pink dress and plumed hat." She

took possession of the young girl and "talked music," so that all the latter remembered of Cagliostro's conversation was his parting words to her father: "Be sure, Monsieur le Marquis, that Count Cagliostro will always try to render himself useful to you." When the family returned to Versailles Mme. de Donnissan resumed her attendance on Madame Victoire, and in spite of her continued ill-health and sorrow, the usual round of visits and gaiety went on as before.

Victorine was now fifteen, and the time for her to be settled in marriage was approaching. Although she had, in her infancy, been destined to marry her cousin, M. de Lescure, losses of fortune made her parents hesitate to permit the marriage, and now for a time she was promised to the son of the Comte de Montmorin, a great personage who had a *rente* of 50,000 francs. The youthful bridegroom was fourteen, and the marriage was to take place in eighteen months' time. As we know that this, and also another project of marriage came to nothing, we may turn to Victorine's description of her real future husband, Louis-Marie de Salugues, Marquis de Lescure: "I was destined from my earliest childhood," she says, "to marry M. de Lescure, my first cousin. From the cradle I loved him." The young Louis had been educated at the Military College, which he left at the age of sixteen, and among the youth of his time he was distinguished by his talents, and still more so by his irreproachable conduct in the midst of the dangers of the period. "His great piety preserved him from contagion, and isolated him

amidst the Court and Society," says his future wife.

M. de Lescure was very good-looking, but he was very shy and even *gauche* in manner, and so modest that he did his best to hide his acquirements. Very gentle and good-tempered he yet held strongly to his opinions, and was gifted with an imperturbable *sang froid*. He devoted much time to study, and Mme. de la Rochejaquelein gives an anecdote to show how unobtrusively he could conceal his knowledge. One day when sitting in Mme. de Civrac's drawing-room he took up a book, for which the latter reproached him as a breach of good manners, saying if the book was interesting the least he could do was to read it aloud. He obeyed, but at the end of half an hour someone going up to him exclaimed: "But this is in English. Why did you not say so?" De Lescure, rather disconcerted, replied: "My grandmother does not know English, so I was obliged to read it in French."

At the moment we write of the marriage had been given up for the cause above mentioned, and although she still cared for her cousin Victorine was too young to know her real feelings, and even confesses that she would have felt some reluctance to marry anyone who was *gauche* and was laughed at on account of his old-fashioned clothes and way of doing his hair. The same want of fortune, resulting from unexpected causes, eventually broke off the projected alliance with the de Montmorins, and Victorine was a little disappointed. As she naively says, she was sorry not to be a married lady and to miss the balls promised to her by Mme. de Montmorin *mère*.

Mme. de Donnissan's health continued bad, and

she obtained leave from Madame Victoire to spend the summer at their family place in Gascony; on the road thither she stopped at Tours to see Cardinal de Rohan, who was pleased by this visit made to him in his exile. The family party, after spending some months at their country house, and that of the de Lorges, returned to Versailles at the end of 1788. "There was still talk of marrying me," says Mme. de la Rochejaquelein, "but my mother was undecided. We thus reached the moment when the States General were assembling."

Although Mme. de la Rochejaquelein disclaims writing the story of the Revolution, she describes very graphically the last days of the monarchy, of which she had the misfortune to be an eye-witness. The Assembly brought crowds to Versailles, and Mme. de Donnissan received the Deputies in great numbers, but only the loyal members, for, says her daughter, those of a different opinion ceased to come.

Soon after the opening the poor little Dauphin died. "I saw him continually... he had a charming face, his character, his intellect, his youthful pride, his gentleness, made him very worthy of our regrets, and gave great promise.... He was latterly in a sad state. He could no longer walk, and his body was one large wound; but he suffered with great resignation... he was adored by his attendants, one of whom, on being wakened suddenly to be told, 'M. le Dauphin is dead,' expired from the shock."

On July 13th, the Regiments of Nassau and de Bouillon arrived at Versailles, and were lodged in the Orangery. The bands played and the men danced,

while crowds of people looked on; everything was joy and brightness. "Never shall I forget the sudden change," says Mme. de la Rochejaquelein. "First we heard whispering among those who surrounded us. M. de Bonsol, an officer of the *Gardes du Corps*, came to us and said 'Go indoors, the people in Paris have risen, they have taken the Bastille, and it is said that they are marching on Versailles.' We returned to our apartments. We saw fear succeed to the previous gaiety. In one moment the terrace was deserted."

This was, as we know, only a first alarm, and the history of the following weeks is well known; but both Mme. de la Rochejaquelein and her mother give a very interesting account of the last sad night passed at Versailles. Mme. de Donnissan (who wrote her reminiscences for her granddaughter) says: "On Oct. 5th, 1789, I went to Madame Victoire at a quarter to twelve (at night) to ask how she was and whether she was going to bed. She was with Madame Adelaide; they had both passed the day with the poor Queen. I had hardly entered when M. Louis de Narbonne came in quickly, laughing over the fears of the day, but he had hardly ended when M. de Thianges opened the door and announced to Mesdames that the troops had arrived, and M. de Lafayette was with the King. Mesdames went at once to join him. I returned to my rooms to await news. It was bright moonlight, my windows looked on the *grande rue* of the Palace. I saw a great quantity of troops march past and bivouac in the houses near the Palace. At one

o'clock your grandfather, your uncle and many others came to tell me that M. de Lafayette had reached the King half dead from fatigue and fear, that he had asked the King, in the name of the people, to take back the *Gardes Françaises* who had abandoned the flag. The King consented and M. de Lafayette assured him that he was going to retire with the scum of Paris. In consequence the King desired everyone to return to their apartments."

Mme. de la Rochejaquelein tells us that her parents and Mme. d'Estournel did not go to bed that night, but apparently they were almost the only persons who realised the gravity of the situation. "About five o'clock," she continues, "my mother saw that the crowd was moving tumultuously, and going out with my father and Mme. d'Estournel they went to the Vestibule of the Chapel from whence one enters the Great Gallery—the doors were shut and all was quiet. They came back, happily for themselves, as an instant later the servants came to say that two *Gardes du Corps* had rushed in as if they were mad.... A moment afterwards the people entered the corridors in crowds. My mother, who could not resist her anxiety, and did not know how to hear what was going on, enquired of the sentinel of the National Guard, who was under our window, at the door of the Opera House, what the people were doing in the courtyard. The window was very high up and the sentinel screamed: 'Madame, it is the *Gardes du Corps*,' and at the same time he made a sign with his hand to show that their heads were being cut off."

After these horrors came the fatal news that the

King had consented to go to Paris, at which there were rejoicings—how ill-founded was soon to appear. "We returned to Mesdames, and I made them *Cocades* with ribbon. Mesdames got into the carriage. Mme. de Narbonne, Mme. de Chastellux, my mother and I were with them... I do not wish to forget that the Queen, as she entered her carriage surrounded by the people who had wished to murder her, recognised in the crowd the Baron de Ross, one of the *Gardes du Corps* in disguise, and had the goodness to say to him out loud: 'You will go for me to ask after M. de La Savonière, and tell him how much concerned I am at his state.' This gentleman had been wounded the previous night. Mme. de Donnissan had obtained leave for her daughter to accompany her, and they went with Mesdames to Belle Vue instead of following the King to Paris. From there Mesdames sent to enquire for the Royal Family," adds Mme. de Donnissan, "and heard that Bourdel, the King's dentist, had, on entering His Majesty's presence, died of sorrow."[1]

Mme. de Donnissan and her daughter remained at Belle Vue till October 16th. The life was very *triste*, and her mother's health had been quite shattered by the scenes she had gone through, so Madame Victoire gave them permission to go to the country. Accompanied by M. de Donnissan and the young Duc de Civrac, they retired to the Château of Blaignac, near Libourne, belonging to M. de Lorges. The view from there was beautiful and the park agreeable, we are told, but the party were

[1] See *Mesdames de France*, Stryenski; Paris 1910, p. 255, appendix ii.

forced to lead a very dull, quiet life, as the state of the roads in winter and, still more, the threats uttered by the peasants in the neighbourhood, prevented all gatherings of friends. The peasants on M. de Lorges' property were, however, fairly quiet and showed affection for their master, and Mme. de la Rochejaquelein adds that they came to the Château every Sunday to dance, and that her only amusement was to join them.

After eight months at Blaignac, the family moved on to M. de Donnissan's own place, Citron, in Médoc. Here the same state of things prevailed: the people were attached to their lord, and a quiet, peaceful time ensued, and here Victorine's happy marriage was finally arranged. "M. de Lescure, having come to see us, my mother told us that we were at liberty to marry if he wished. These words enlightened us as to our real feelings. Once my mother had given him hope, his affection for me grew stronger than ever, and he spoke of it to me for the first time in his life. I realised quickly that I had not ceased to care for him. I confessed this to my mother, and she repeated it to him, and we found ourselves the two happiest people in the world—our marriage was decided."

At this time M. de Lescure belonged to a royalist confederation, which had been formed in Poitou: a very important one, his fiancée says, and capable of employing 30,000 men in the royal cause. Two regiments of soldiers had joined it, one of which formed the garrison of La Rochelle and the other was at Poitiers. On a given day they were all to meet

THE MARQUIS DE LESCURE.

From a Lithograph by F. Delpech.

Facing p. 19.

and unite with another party of royalists to join the emigrant Princes, who were waiting in Savoy. The flight of the King to Varennes, and his fatal arrest, put an end to this project, and M. de Lescure, who had left Victorine to fulfil his duties, returned to Poitou. The dissolution of this royalist coalition was most unfortunate, the more so as the gentlemen who formed its chiefs were looked up to by their peasants, who begged them to lead them against the "Patriots," but the rage for emigration had set in, and against the views of the Princes and the opinion of M. de Lescure, and some others, the young nobles flocked to the frontier, M. de Lescure and M. de Lorges among them, for apparently they thought they could not in honour remain behind.

As soon as he reached Tournay, however, M. de Lescure heard that his grandmother was dangerously ill, and obtained leave to return to Poitou for a few days. He found her in less danger than had been anticipated, and determined to try and see his fiancée also before leaving France. He therefore reached Citron after a very difficult journey, and found that in the meantime the dispensation for his marriage—necessary in the case of first cousins—had been sent from Rome. The dispensation was granted under the condition that the marriage should be celebrated by a priest who had not taken the civil oath now demanded from the clergy. Mme. de la Roche-jaquelein thinks this was the first time the Pope had made known his opinion on the matter, and adds that several priests in the neighbourhood, hearing of it, withdrew the oath they had given.

The Curé at Citron was happily an *Insermenté*, as those were termed who had refused to take the oath. Thus everything became easy, and Mme. de Donnissan determined to allow the marriage to take place at once. M. de Lescure was agreeably surprised to find that the banns were already given out, and, learning here that the projects of the Emigrés were so little advanced that no immediate steps could be taken, and that he could stay in France for the winter, he determined to remain. Three days later the marriage took place. "It was Oct. 27th, 1791. I was nineteen and M. de Lescure twenty-five. No one came to the ceremony. The peasants were entertained, and in the evening we danced with them. This was the happiest time of my life; alas, it did not last long. Three weeks after my marriage M. de Lescure heard that his grandmother had had another attack and I left my father and mother and accompanied him to Poitou. His grandmother spent two months between life and death.... She could only articulate a few words to pray to God, and of thanks for the care taken of her. Never did anyone die with such angelic courage. As titles were now suppressed, none could be engraved on her tomb, but the peasants had these words written on it: *Here lies the Mother of the Poor.* This was worth many epitaphs."

CHAPTER II.

PARIS IN 1792.

In February, 1792, M. and Mme. de Lescure moved to Paris, and took up their residence in a house called the *Hotel Diesbach*, 8 Rue des Saussaies.[1] A very anxious time followed for the young couple. Their friends continued to emigrate in crowds, and M. de Lescure, from an idea of duty which seems strange to us, felt that he ought to follow them; and indeed he was blamed for not starting. His wife suffered much from fear of his action being misunderstood and set to work to try and ascertain from the Royal family an indication of what their wishes were in the matter. She could not be presented to the King, she tells us, because, for fear that the wives of the *Tiers Etat* Deputies would want to be admitted at Court, all presentations had been stopped. Mme. de Lamballe, however, was an intimate friend of Mme. de Donnissan, and Victoire determined to seek her help. Her words about this brave and unfortunate lady are valuable. "I went hardly anywhere," she says, "except to Mme. La Princesse

[1] This house, which was abandoned after the fatal Aug. 10th, was found to be in good order and still furnished in 1796, and became the headquarters of the Society for the Independence of Poland.

de Lamballe. I was a witness to all her anxieties —all her sorrows. No one was ever more courageously devoted to the Queen than she. She had made the sacrifice of her life. A little before the 10th August she said to me: 'The greater grows the danger the more courage I feel. I am ready to die, I am afraid of nothing.' She had no thought but for the King and Queen." Mme. de Lescure implored this kind friend to speak to the Queen and ask her wishes, and Her Majesty's reply, which she charged Mme. de Lamballe to repeat word by word, was this: "I have nothing new to say to M. de Lescure. It is for him to consult his conscience, his duty, his honour; but he should consider that the defenders of the throne are always in their right place when they are near the King."

These were plain words and M. de Lescure, of course, at once obeyed and determined to remain. Naturally his change of plan brought comment, and as the Queen's orders were to be kept secret the position was somewhat difficult. Mme. de Lescure obtained leave to send a message secretly to M. de Lorges to say that her husband had received special orders, and M. de Marigny, a friend who had accompanied the de Lescures to Paris, got leave also to remain. Many other gentlemen of Poitou, guessing that these two had received secret instructions, implored them to give them a hint to enable them also to stay, but there was so much uncertainty and fear of treachery at Court that nothing was done, and those who might have formed an increasing and numerous party of Royalist gentlemen, devoted to

the King's interests in Paris, were allowed to form other plans.

All summer passed in this unsatisfactory manner. M. de Lescure went to the Tuileries unofficially, and went about town, and even, in disguise, among the people, to observe what was going on. At last on July 25th, while Mme. de Lescure was with Mme. de Lamballe, the latter told her of the arrival of the Baron de Viomenil, who had just come from Coblentz, and who was to command the gentlemen who had remained with the King. As she spoke the Baron entered the room and she told him that M. de Lescure had received private orders and recommended him to his notice. On the following day M. de Lescure went to Court and the Queen said to him: "I heard that you had brought Victorine. She cannot appear at Court but I want to see her; let her be at Mme. de Lamballe's to-morrow at midday." Mme. de Lescure thus describes the interview.

"I went to Mme. de Lamballe; the Queen arrived and embraced me. We all three went into a little room apart, and after some kind words the Queen said: 'And you, Victorine, what do you intend doing? I imagine that you are here, like every one else, with the intention of emigrating.' I replied that that had been M. de Lescure's intention, but that he would remain in Paris if he thought he could be of use to Her Majesty. The Queen reflected for a time, and then said very seriously: 'He is a good man; he has no ambition; let him remain.' I told the Queen that her words would be law to us."

Marie Antoinette invited her to meet her and the royal children in the Duchesse de Tourzel's rooms on the following day. On this occasion the Queen whispered to Mme. de Lescure: "'Victorine, I hope you are remaining.' I told her yes," continues the latter, "and she pressed my hand again. She talked to Mesdames de Lamballe and de Tourzel, and speaking of me several times, repeated, 'Victorine wants to stay.' After this M. de Lescure went to the Tuileries on every Court day and each time the Queen spoke to him."[1]

Apparently Mme. de Lescure never saw the Queen again, and we have reached the beginning of the end. On July 29th M. and Mme. de Donnissan arrived in Paris, flying from Médoc on account of the scenes which were taking place at Bordeaux, where two priests had been massacred. Mme. de Lescure also describes the terrible murder of a priest in their own street on August 8th.

On the 9th M. de Grémion, a Swiss officer of the King's Constitutional Guard, came to live in the Hotel Diesbach, and as his arrival took place at dusk it was happily unperceived. This was an important point later when the massacre of the Swiss Guard took place close by.

Rumours were heard of an expected rising. On the next day, August 10th, M. de Lescure was

[1] "Pendant cet hiver de 1792, Marie Antoinette est encore entourée de tout un groupe de fidèles... une de ces jeunes femmes plaisait particulièrement à la Reine; c'était la Marquise de Lescure. Marie Antoinette l'avait connue tout enfant. Sur la conseil de la Reine, le jeune Ménage de Lescure n'émigra pas, et ce fut ainsi que La Vendée eut un héros de plus."—I. DE LA FAYE, *Amitiés de Reine*, p. 514.

preparing to pass the night at the Tuileries, when he was reassured by M. de Montmorin, who was Governor of Fontainebleau and much in the King's confidence. This gentleman brought the news that the King knew for certain that the attack would not be made till the 12th. "This communication," says Mme. de Lescure, "made us share the security with which perfidious reports had inspired the Court."

Towards midnight, however, they heard footsteps in the street and quiet knocks at the house doors. Looking out they saw that the Section Battalion was being assembled for the object, as they supposed, of attacking the Arsenal. But, "between two and three in the morning the tocsin began to ring, and M. de Lescure, unable to resist his anxiety, armed himself and set off with M. de Marigny to see if the people were going towards the Tuileries...." They tried to get into the Palace by all the issues with which they were well acquainted, but piquets of guards kept each door and prevented the King's defenders from entering. M. de Lescure, after going all round the Tuileries and witnessing the massacre of M. Suleau, came back to disguise himself as a common man, but he had hardly got home when the cannonade commenced.

"Then despair seized him: he could not console himself for not having been able to get into the Palace. Suddenly we heard cries of *Au secours, voilà les Suisses, nous sommes perdus*. The Section Battalion was returning and was joined by three thousand men, armed with quite new pikes, who came from the Faubourg. For a moment we

thought the King had got the upper hand, but soon the cries of *Vive la Nation*! *Vivent les Sans Culottes*! succeeded to those heard at first, and we remained in a state of consternation between life and death."

A day of terror succeeded this terrible night. The Swiss Guards were being massacred in the neighbourhood, and the name of the house itself, which was inscribed over the door—Hotel Diesbach—was not a reassuring one for its inhabitants. Many passers-by remarked on it, and M. de Lescure was reported to be a *Chevalier du Poignard*, as those gentlemen were called who were secret servants of the King; but fortunately the de Lescures were popular in the neighbourhood and no attack was made on them. Nevertheless, as Mme. de Lescure says, they waited impatiently for the evening in order to make their escape and agreed to seek refuge with a former maid-servant who lived in the Rue l'Université, Faubourg Saint Germain. M. and Mme. de Donnissan went on in front, and Mme. de Lescure followed with her husband. Her account of their adventures may be given in her own words. She was now expecting her first child, and this night's walk and the many anxieties of the following days, which are only a prelude to all she went through during the war, are a wonderful proof of what a frail woman can bear, and do, when called upon by duty and affection.

"We went down the Allée de Marigny and from there into the Champs Elysées, where silence and darkness reigned, only we heard distant gun shots in the direction of the Tuileries. All the alleys were deserted. Suddenly we heard the voice of a woman

approaching us, calling for help. She was being pursued by a man, who, she thought, was going to kill her. She rushed to M. de Lescure and seized his arm, saying: 'Monsieur, defend me.' He felt very embarrassed, being without arms (for I had insisted on his leaving his pistols behind, fearing he would be recognised as a *Chevalier du poignard*) and held back by two women who clung to him. He tried in vain to free himself and go to the man, who was aiming his gun at us, saying: 'I have killed many aristocrats to-day; these will be in addition.' He was quite drunk. M. de Lescure asked what he wanted with this woman and he replied: 'I ask her to show me the road to the Tuileries that I may go and kill the Swiss.' In fact he had not intended to hurt her. M. de Lescure, with his admirable coolness, said to him: 'You are right. I am going there also.' So the man began to talk, but from time to time he aimed his gun at us, saying that he suspected us of being aristocrats, and at least wished to kill the woman.'' At last, after arranging a rendezvous with M. de Lescure at the Tuileries he left them.

To please Madame de Lescure they now avoided the by-paths and began to walk on the outer road. ''Never shall I forget the sight,'' she continues. ''To the right and the left were the Champs Elysées, where more than a thousand people had been massacred during the day. The most complete darkness reigned there, while in front one perceived the flames of the *barracks*, rising above the Tuileries, and one could hear the fusillade and the cries of the populace. Behind us the buildings at the *barrière* were also in

flames.... Fear seized me, and I dragged M. de Lescure to the left along the Faubourg Saint Honoré. We arrived on the Place Louis XV., which we were going to cross when we saw a body of men coming from the Tuileries by the *pont-tournant* and discharging firearms. So we took the Rue Royale and then the Rue Saint Honoré, and passed through crowds of men armed with pikes and uttering horrible cries. Most of them were drunk.

"I had so utterly lost my head that I went along calling out, without knowing what I was doing: *Vivent les Sans Culottes; illuminez, cassez les vitres*, repeating mechanically the vociferations I had heard. M. de Lescure could not calm, or stop me." At last the fugitives passing the Pont Neuf reached the other side of the Seine, where everything was perfectly silent, though the flames of the burning Tuileries threw a sinister light, and the sounds of cannon and shooting could be heard. Mme. de Lescure was too exhausted to go further, and they sought shelter with an old housekeeper of the de Lescures. "I found there two of my brave servants. They had come to hide my diamonds and other precious things which they had brought away at the peril of their lives, for the populace massacred anyone found pillaging houses or having the appearance of so doing. They told me my mother was safe, and I begged them to go and tell her of my own safety, but they were unable to get to her and she passed the night in an agony, while my father went round the town trying to discover what had happened to me."

The de Lescures and de Donnissans now spent a week in their different hiding places, but the ladies could meet by visiting each other disguised as women of the people. Later on, fearing to return to the Hotel Diesbach, they all went for a time to a furnished hotel —de l'Université. Here they heard the news shouted by the public crier that Mme. de Lamballe had been taken to the prison of La Force, and Mme. de Donnissan fell seriously ill from the shock. As soon as the poor lady was a little better plans were made to leave Paris, for the party was in constant danger as many arrests were being made; but it was feared that to ask for passports might only accelerate the danger.

At this moment help came. "God sent us a deliverer," said Mme. de Lescure, "in the person of M. Thomassin, who had been M. de Lescure's tutor. He devoted himself to us and resolved to save us or to perish." In spite of his affection for his old pupil, this good gentleman had mixed a little with the Revolutionary Party and was Commissary of Police and Captain of the Section of Magloire. He was a man of infinite resource and had a gift of oratory, all of which he used for the welfare of his friends. He boldly took them to the Section himself in uniform and obtained the passports in this way. While he held forth in the pompous language of the patriots, an "honest secretary" made out the papers unseen. On the following day, M. de Lescure wished to obtain the same favour for M. Henri de la Rochejaquelein, afterwards the hero of La Vendée, and for M. Charles d'Autichamps, both of

whom had been in the King's service at the Tuileries, and in spite of considerable danger the passports were procured. When the party reached the barrier on their way out of Paris they encountered fresh difficulties, for the mob surrounded the carriage crying: *à la lanterne, à l'Abbaye, ce sont des Aristocrates qui se sauvent.*

Here again the excellent M. Thomassin came to the rescue, harangued the people, enthusiastically urged the young men to fly to the defence of the country, promised to lead them to fight when he returned, declared he and his friends were going to fetch forage for the army, and concluded by begging them all to join him in crying *Vive la Nation.* While the crowd, now quite moved to sympathy, applauded him, M. Thomassin threw himself into the carriage and they proceeded on the road to Orleans. The adventures of the day were not yet over however; at a short distance from Paris the postillion managed to displease some troops who were on their way to Orleans to bring back the prisoners whom they afterwards killed at Versailles; and all along the route they met other soldiers who were stopping carriages and insulting their occupants. But when M. de Thomassin in his Republican uniform showed himself and shouted *Vive la Nation,* all went well.

"In the evening we reached Orleans; at the barrier our passports were demanded, and there was a crowd of people who asked anxiously whether it was true that the prisoners were being sent for. The latter were good, honest folk, they said, and the town was

devoted to them and would defend them if it was intended to harm them. I was much touched by the sentiment of this excellent populace, and this scene will be ever present to my memory."

After passing Beaugency the party was stopped at some village to show their passports again, and when it was known that one of the travellers was a Captain of the National Guard of Paris, he was asked to review fifty of the villagers who were about to join the army. The indefatigable M. Thomassin alighted, gravely drew his sword and reviewed the young men; after this the travellers started again with the usual cries of *Vive la Nation*. Ten such adventures befell them during the journey. M. Thomassin was received everywhere like a general, and thanks to him the party, though they met in all about 40,000 volunteers, were neither stopped nor insulted. At Tours they learnt that there was trouble at Bressuire, near Clisson, where they meant to seek refuge; so most of them remained in the outskirts of Tours while M. de Lescure went on in to Poitou.

At this point Mme. de Lescure brings her short autobiographical introduction to a close, and begins the *Mémoires* proper. We must leave behind us the early years of happiness and prosperity, and bid farewell to the glamour which surrounds everything connected with the Old Régime and the Court life of France, to follow our heroine into other surroundings and into dangers not less than those she has escaped in Paris, but of a very different character.

CHAPTER III.

COMMENCEMENT OF THE WAR.

BEFORE we accompany Mme. de Lescure to Clisson, it may be interesting to recall the chief features of the country and people with whom she was to be so intimately connected. The district, then known as *Le Bocage*, and which since the war has been called "by the glorious name of La Vendée," comprises portions of Poitou, Anjou, and of the province of Nantes, and to-day forms part of the four departments of Loire Inférieure, Maine et Loire, Deux Sèvres and Vendée. It is bounded to the north of Nantes by the Loire, by Paimbeuf, Pornic, and much marshy ground to the west; by the sea from Bourgneuf to St. Gilles; on the other side, if a line could be drawn a little above Les Sables d'Olonne,[1] which, after passing between Luçon, La Roche-sur-Yon, Fontenay, Chataigneraye, Parthenay, Thouarée, Vihiers and Brissac, should end on the Loire a little above Pont de Cé, the area of the war

[1] "Les Sables d'Olonne. This place is aptly called. Never, I think, saw I such sands as these, so velvety, smooth and firm. This and the bluest, warmest sea in the world are enough to account for the great popularity of the little watering place."—BETHUAM EDWARDS, *Unfrequented France.*

would be defined. The fighting sometimes extended farther, but only temporarily. The scene of the insurrection, the real Vendée, is enclosed in this space.

The character of the country rendered it peculiarly suitable for the kind of warfare about to be attempted. Two big roads, one running from Nantes to La Rochelle, and another from Tours to Bordeaux by way of Poitiers, traversed the country, while the thirty leagues which separated them were covered with narrow cross-roads running between high banks, very muddy in winter and dusty in summer. These lanes, which were often mere beds of streams, abutted on open spaces from which other roads again branched off, but where there was nothing to indicate their destination, so that the inhabitants of the neighbourhood themselves frequently lost their way. Natural obstacles, such as these, were of immense value to the combatants, and often proved to be an insurmountable barrier to the advance of the troops sent against them. But the chief advantage for the Royalists lay in their own characteristics, and the bond of mutual affection which united them to their chiefs. This was a still greater factor in their favour. Let us hear Mme. de la Rochejaquelein's words about the "excellent people" she was to get to know so well: "They are gentle, pious, hospitable, charitable," she says, "full of courage and gaiety. They are very moral and are very honest. One never hears of crime and seldom of a law suit. They were devoted to their *Seigneurs*, for whom they showed respect mixed with

familiarity; their character, which has something that is at once shy, timid, and mistrustful, inspired them with a great attachment for those who had for so long possessed their confidence.

"The small proprietors and the people in the smaller towns had not the same devoted sentiments for the *noblesse* as the peasants, but they also retained much affection and respect for the great families who had often shown them kindness, and although a few had embraced the revolutionary doctrines it was but mildly. The horrors committed in the course of the war were not their doing, and, indeed, were often strongly opposed by them. The lives led by the *noblesse* were simple and patriarchal, in spite of their occasional visits to Paris, and nothing had yet come to interfere with the mutual bond between them and their people. The *Seigneur* treated them paternally, often visited them, and talked to them of their affairs, took part in the accidents and misfortunes which might also affect his interests, went to the weddings of their children, and drank with their guests. On Sundays there was dancing in the courtyard of the Château, in which the ladies joined. When there was to be a hunt for wild boar or wolves, the curé gave it out at the sermon, and everyone was delighted to bring their guns to the spot designated—the men were posted in their different places and did exactly as they were told. Afterwards they followed their leaders to the war in the same way, and with the same docility."

When, in 1790, the Revolution broke out, the larger towns showed themselves favourable to it, and

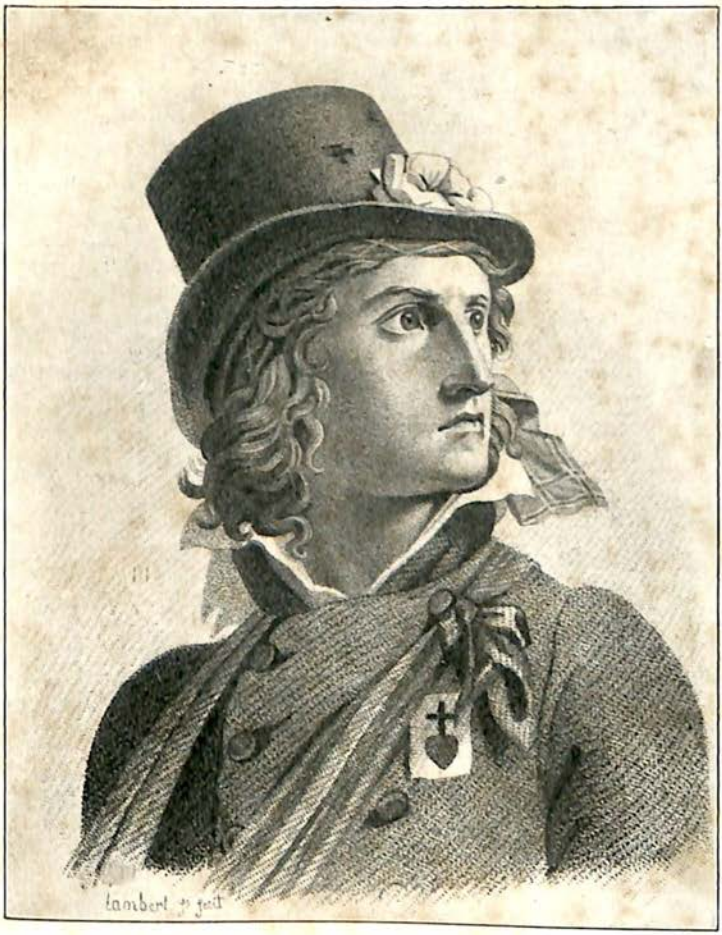
in some parts of the low country châteaux were attacked and burnt, but the inhabitants of the *Bocage* saw all this with fear and sorrow. When the National Guard was formed, the *Seigneur* in each parish was asked to take command. When mayors were to be appointed he, again, was requested to take office. An order was given to remove the Seignorial Bench in the churches, but it was not executed; in fact the peasants showed themselves daily less content with the new order of things and more devoted to the *noblesse*. Greater still was their deep attachment to their faith and their clergy. When their own priests were taken from them they were heart-broken, and the *insermenté* priests were insulted or abandoned; the former curés hid themselves and said Mass in the woods. When force was tried, there were partial risings and the peasants proved their courage in defending themselves against the gendarmes. One poor man fought them valiantly with a hay-fork; he received twenty-four sabre wounds, and was called on to yield, but his only reply as he expired was these words: "Give me back my God."

After the fatal 10th of August, 1792, sterner measures were taken which accelerated the rising. The loyal priests were persecuted with greater violence, and some chapels were shut; this led to a temporary rising ending with an attempt on Bressuire, in which a hundred peasants were killed, crying "Vive le Roi"; and five hundred were taken prisoners, some of whom were massacred. Other atrocities were committed by the National Guard,

in spite of the efforts made by the inhabitants of Bressuire to save the prisoners.

These sad events occurred just before the de Lescures and their party reached Clisson, and we will now resume the narrative. After spending two days in the *Faubourg* of Tours, a message was received from M. de Lescure to say that everything was quiet in Poitou, and the journey could be resumed. Mme. de Lescure and her friends proceeded by the Saumur road, and met, here and there, with the usual signs of unrest. At Thouars, where the spirit of the town was revolutionary, they were only allowed to pass after their baggage had been rigorously examined, "even to opening pots of jam to see if they contained gunpowder." At last they reached the Château of Clisson, which belonged to M. de Lescure, and was situated in the *Bocage*, in the parish of Boismé, which had taken no share in the revolution, and had kept its own priests. Although themselves now in comparative safety, terrible news soon reached the family: first, that of the September massacres and the murder of Mme. de Lamballe, and of M. de Montmorin, and then of the dissolution of the convents. Mme. de Donnissan had been educated by her aunt, the Abbesse of Saint-Auxonne, to whom she was much attached, and M. Thomassin was sent at once to beg her and others of the community to take refuge at Clisson. The Abbesse alone accepted, and remained with the de Lescures throughout their wanderings.

M. Henri de la Rochejaquelein, who had escaped from Paris, and whose family had emigrated, was



HENRI DE LA ROCHEJAQUELEIN,
Commander-in-Chief of the Vendean Army.
From an Engraving by Lambert.

Facing p. 36.

now staying alone at the Château of Durbelière in the parish of Saint Aubin de Baubigny, one of the places that had joined the revolution. His isolation and his rank, as one of the King's officers, made his position particularly perilous, and M. de Lescure persuaded him also to come to Clisson. The hero, who was only twenty, is described at this time as "a shy young man who had lived little in the world; his face was noble and gentle, his eyes, in spite of his timid air, were bright and animated; later his glance became strong and ardent. His height was five feet seven—he had a good figure, fair hair, rather a long face, and was in appearance more English than French. He excelled in all bodily exercises, especially in horsemanship." Several other friends formed part of the household, and, as Mme. de Lescure tells us, Clisson was inhabited at this time chiefly by women or aged persons. M. de Lescure was much loved in the neighbourhood, and considered to be entirely devoted to piety and study, so that the party lived peacefully and undisturbed, and here, on October 31st, our heroine's first child—a girl—was born.

The joy this event would naturally have caused was overshadowed by fears for the future. M. de Lescure foresaw that a rising was probable, and in this event he was determined not to abandon his people. His wife, on her side, was equally resolute in her intentions of following him to the field of battle, or to prison, if necessary, and she therefore gave up nursing her child, as she would have done in happier times, in order to be free to leave her when the call

should come. The moment, indeed, was at hand, for in the following January came the news of the King's death. It brought grief and consternation to the Royalists, and was a deep personal sorrow to all at Clisson. MM. de Lescure and de la Rochejaquelein had hoped that an effort would be made for the King's deliverance in which they could take part, but "nothing was attempted," says Mme. de Lescure. "It can easily be understood what profound sorrow was ours on hearing the news; for several days there was nothing but tears throughout the house."

Later in the winter Mme. de Donnissan, wishing to leave Clisson and return into Médoc, was anxious for her daughter to accompany her, but the latter could not leave her husband, and M. de Donnissan also desired to be at hand should the country, which was being continually harassed by the Republicans, rise as he anticipated. Things were in this state when the war actually broke out, and we think it due to Mme. de Lescure to give her own account of its origin, as her views have been gainsaid by more modern writers. As she was often an eye-witness and an actor in this episode of history, and as her statements, as we have seen, were controlled by M. de Barante's later knowledge and by that of others who actually took part in the war, her testimony is of special value.

"I now come," she says, "to this ever memorable period. It can be seen that this war was not, as has been said, started by the nobles, or the priests. Unhappy peasants, wounded in all that

they held dear, held in a subjection which all that they had enjoyed before rendered more wearing, were unable to bear it. They rebelled and took for their leaders the men to whom they were attached. The gentlemen and the proscribed and persecuted priests—who were also enemies to the cause which was being attacked by the peasants—marched with them and kept up their courage, but they did not begin the war, for no sensible person could suppose that a handful of poor men without arms or money could hope to vanquish the forces of the whole of France. They fought for opinion, for sentiment, from despair, and not from calculation. There was no end in view, not even a positive hope, and the first successes surpassed the expectations they had conceived. There was no plan, no plotting, nor any secret intelligence. The people rose *en masse* because the first attempt found all minds ready for revolt. The chiefs of the different insurrections did not even know each other. As regards M. de Lescure and my relations, I can affirm that they took no step which could bring about the war. They foresaw it, even wished it, but only as a vague and distant idea. If they had provoked the rising in some secret ways, or had actively urged on the peasants, I should have known it, and certainly there would be no reason for concealing it. The rest of my story will show how they were drawn to take part in the insurrection. I think I can affirm that in Anjou things happened in much the same manner."

Mme. de Bouëre, to whom we have before alluded

as the friend and fellow sufferer of Mme. de Lescure, and who lived in Anjou, bears her testimony as to the beginnings of the war, in these words:

"The Vendeans were true volunteers in the cause of religion and monarchy; trusting in its justice, they served it with admirable devotion and the most noble disinterestedness, looking for no reward save the success of the enterprise, which was to preserve the faith of their fathers and to give back the throne to its legitimate sovereign. The death of the King, which at first they refused to believe, excited such lively indignation among these good people, that they swore never to serve under his executioners."

Such were the real causes of the war, and it may be truly said, that, except when terrible cruelties on the part of some of their adversaries exasperated the peasants, and in the case of some early incidents in Charrette's division, it was as a war of singular justice, and of mercy for their prisoners, on the part of the Vendeans.

Soon after the news of the King's execution, came an order from the Convention for a levée of three hundred thousand men, and the moment of the usual *tirage au sort* became, to use Mme. de Bouëre's expressive words, "the electric shock which facilitated the explosion." At Saint Florent in Anjou the date of the *tirage* was fixed for March 10th, and Mme. de Bouëre here gives more details than were available to Mme. de Lescure. She describes how the Citizen Duval—the Procureur-Syndic—got up on a chair on the Place Maubet and proclaimed the law of the Convention requisitioning three hundred thou-

sand men. The place was crowded, and Duval was hardly permitted to finish before he was upset and rudely handled by some of the young men present. The Garde Nationale surrounded the latter and took them off to prison; but next day the peasants flocked into Saint Florent, released the prisoners while the Syndic and the National Guard fled hurriedly to take refuge in an island opposite the town.

The Royalists went on to Chapelle en Genet, of which they took possession after beating the Republicans, or the *Blues* as they were called, and proceeded to ask first M. de Bonchamps and soon afterwards M. d'Elbée, both of whom had served in the King's army, to command them. Mme. de Bouëre relates that she was at home, and comforting herself with the fact of her husband's absence just then, when "we saw the courtyard filled with peasants, several of whom approached the window where I was, and the one who was at the head of them told me they were going to attack the *Blues* at Jallais, that I was not to be anxious, that the men under his command were full of courage and they would be victorious because the cause they served was that of God and of the Martyred King. I offered them a drink. "No wine," replied the Chief, whose name was Perdrault. "We must have *sang froid* in an affair such as this." After accepting some cider and water, and receiving a gun and two pistols, for they were ill-armed, the men went their way after a last word of reassurance from Perdrault to Mme. de Bouëre, who had been alarmed by words she heard from one of the men. "Madame, fear nothing. I only placed myself at

their head on condition that nothing should be done unworthy of the holy cause we have embraced, and that they should obey me in everything."

In the meantime other groups of Royalists formed themselves headed by the famous Cathelineau, Stofflet, Charrette, Sapinaud, and others. The first named was kneading the household bread, when he received news of the rising at Saint Florent, and at once resolved to place himself at the head of his countrymen. His wife implored him not to think of doing so, but he would not listen, and, drying his hands, he went out at once to collect together the inhabitants of his village of Pin en Mauges. "Everyone loved Cathelineau; he was a good, pious man, and the courage and ardour of his words drew the young men on to follow him."

The towns of Chollet and Chemillé were seized by the insurgents, and in the former they found ammunition and money to assist them; but Easter was at hand, and the peasants thought they had done enough for the time to impress their enemies, so they disbanded and returned home, very much in the manner in which the Highland troops also dissolved in our Scotch wars. When a Republican force sent from Angers appeared on the scene, there was no enemy to be found, and they dared not take reprisals. After Easter the insurgents determined again to take the field, and went to the Châteaux to seek more important chiefs, as we have said. And now we must return to the de Lescures at Clisson, where nothing was yet known of the rising.

CHAPTER IV.

M. HENRI JOINS THE VENDEANS.

DURING all this time the de Lescures were living quietly at Clisson and had no idea of what was going on. "We then lived in such total inaction that we knew nothing of what was happening a few leagues further on," writes Mme. de Lescure. One day M. Thomassin had gone to one of M. de Lescure's properties near Sables d'Olonne, and on his return he came through the small town of Les Herbiers where everything seemed quite quiet.

Barely two hours after he had left the town to continue his return journey to Clisson, he saw behind him a crowd of people flying at full speed, who told him Les Herbiers had been taken by ten thousand Englishmen who had landed on the coast. This, of course, was quite incorrect, but contradictory rumours now poured in. M. Henri de la Rochejaquelein determined to send a messenger to his aunt who lived near Les Herbiers. He wrote an ordinary letter which could excite no suspicion and the servant was to bring a verbal answer, but old M. de Cassaigne, without telling the de Lescures, wrote to Mdlle. de la Rochejaquelein at the same time and

enclosed à dozen little badges of the Sacred Heart. His letter contained the following sentence:

"I send you a little provision of Sacred Hearts which I have painted for you. You know that all who have faith in this devotion succeed in all their undertakings."[1] The servant was arrested at Bressuire, and the letters were opened. As it was commonly reported that the rebels wore Sacred Heart badges in their buttonholes as a sign of their cause, the Chevalier de Cassaigne's letter produced a great effect. "At seven o'clock the next morning," continues Mme. de Lescure, "our people woke us to say that the Château was surrounded by two hundred volunteers and that there were twenty gendarmes in the courtyard. We thought they had come to take M. de la Rochejaquelein, so we hid him; then M. de Lescure went to ask the gendarmes what they wanted. They replied that the Chevalier de Cassaigne must be given up, and also the horses, carriages, arms and ammunition which were in the Château. M. de Lescure laughed and said that apparently they took his house for a fortress commanded by the Chevalier, that there was certainly some mistake in the order, that the Chevalier was an infirm and peaceable person, that they would make

[1] The origin of this well-known practice among the Vendeans is probably to be found in the life of Mdlle. Victoire de Saint Luc, who was forced to leave her convent of Quimper during the Revolution, and who died on the scaffold in 1794, on the *charge of being a nun and of propagating superstitious pictures.* It is recorded of her that she painted and distributed quantities of these little pictures of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord, and Doctor Tremaria, who had received one of these badges from Mdlle. de Saint Luc and had himself distributed them to others, also suffered the same fate for the same cause.

him die of fear if they arrested him, and that he would answer for him." It ended in the de Lescures giving up a few miserable horses. Two days later M. Thomassin returned with news of the Royalist rising, and was able to explain the origin of the gendarmes' domiciliary visit.

The party at Clisson now waited for further news, and spent the day joyfully expecting the Royalist army, but next day came the news that the Republicans had repossessed themselves of Bressuire. "This sad news brought consternation; it was a fatal signal for us. M. de Lescure was forced to come to a decision. All the national guards of the neighbourhood were summoned to defend Bressuire. For four years he had been commandant of his parish; the Château contained twenty-five men capable of bearing arms, and certainly the order for them to march against the rebels could not fail to come. We would willingly have joined the latter, but we did not know where they were and there was no possibility of our escaping."

The family and guests met to discuss the position, and Henri de la Rochejaquelein, the youngest present, spoke first, saying warmly that he would never take arms against the peasants or the *émigrés*, and that it would be better to die. M. de Lescure spoke next, declaring that it would be shameful to fight against their friends. Everyone agreed, and no one thought of showing timidity. "My mother," says Mme. de Lescure, "then said to them, 'Messieurs, you are all agreed rather to die than to be dishonoured. I approve your courage: so that is settled.' She said these words resolutely, and seating herself in an

arm-chair, she added, 'Well, then, I suppose we must all die.'"

M. Thomassin, always ready to sacrifice himself for his friends, declared that he would go to Bressuire and see what he could do, warning them, however, that he might himself now be arrested as a suspect. "We all thanked him," continues Mme. de Lescure. "M. Thomassin set off and we each made our arrangements for the future. I sent my little girl to the village with her nurse, and then my mother, my aunt the abbess, and I hid ourselves in one of the farmhouses. The gentlemen, after insisting that we should not stay with them, remained at home and prepared for all eventualities. We remained at the farm for four hours, on our knees, praying and weeping." At last a more reassuring message was received from M. Thomassin: nothing definite was settled, and no immediate attack was to be feared, though M. de la Rochejaquelein's servant was still in prison and the Republicans talked of shooting him.

The household at Clisson now spent an anxious week. M. Thomassin could not write to them, and any messenger sent to Bressuire could not enter the town without a passport and was carefully searched. Meanwhile Mme. de Lescure was trying to prepare herself for the coming troubles by learning to ride. "M. de Lescure and Henri," she tells us in her charming, simple way, "undertook to teach me. I was very frightened, and even when a servant held my reins and the two gentlemen walked one on each side of me, I cried from fear—but my husband said

that in these times it was good to get accustomed to horses. Little by little I grew less fearful, and I rode slowly about in the neighbourhood of the Château. One morning when we were all three riding, Henri, M. de Lescure and me, we saw some gendarmes arriving in the distance and we forced Henri to gallop to a farm for shelter."

The gendarmes again demanded horses, especially those of M. de la Rochejaquelein, and they told M. de Lescure that the latter was the object of much greater suspicion than himself. "I do not know why," replied M. de Lescure; "he is my cousin and friend, and our views are identical."

Happily the soldiers soon went off and the family were once more left in peace, though kept in constant anxiety as to what would follow. At last a messenger arrived, sent by Mdlle. de la Rochejaquelein to enquire news of her nephew. This young peasant was able to give many particulars regarding the Royalist army. Chatillon was now taken, he said, and all the parishes in its neighbourhood had joined in the rising. He ended by these thrilling words, addressed to M. de la Rochejaquelein: "Monsieur, it is reported that on Sunday you will go to Bressuire to draw lots for entering the Republican army. Can it be possible that you will do this while your peasants are going to fight to avoid doing so? Come with us, Monsieur, the whole country wants you and will obey you." "Henri at once replied that he would follow him, and the peasant told him he must take by-roads and go at least nine leagues across the fields to escape the 'Blue' patrols."

M. de Lescure, of course, wished to go with his cousin, but the latter begged him not to do so, urging that M. de Lescure was in quite a different position to himself, as he had not been asked to join the army and his peasants had not shared in the rising. M. de la Rochejaquelein declared that he would go and observe matters closely and his cousin could join him later. M. de Lescure's family also implored him to remain, and at last he yielded. Others present tried to dissuade M. de la Rochejaquelein from following his generous purpose by telling him his absence would compromise the party at Clisson, and to this argument he was very sensible—but M. de Lescure reassured him: "Honour and your own judgment have made you resolve to go to place yourself at the head of your peasants," he said: "go, follow your design. I am only too distressed not to be able to accompany you; the fear of being put in prison will certainly not lead me to deter you from doing your duty." "Very well then, I will come and deliver you," cried Henri, throwing himself into his arms, and suddenly assuming the proud and martial air, the eagle glance, which henceforth never left him. Thus did the young hero, the beloved *M. Henri* of the war, take his first step in the weighty enterprise which was to end for him in an heroic and too early death. Poor old M. de Cassaigne, whom the late incidents at Clisson had unduly alarmed, insisted on accompanying him to join the Royalists. Although he could be of little use on such an expedition, M. de la Rochejaquelein kindly consented, and the two gentlemen and their peasant guide started that same night.

On the Sunday which had been fixed for the *tirage*, M. de Lescure's people went off to Bressuire, and we must quote Mme. de Lescure's account of what took place at the Château meanwhile. "We were at breakfast," she says, "when all at once we heard cries of *pistolets à la main*, and saw twenty gendarmes gallop into the courtyard. The Château was surrounded and we went down at once to the gendarmes. They read an order from headquarters to the effect that M. and Mme. de Lescure, M. d'Auzone, and all other suspected persons who might be at Clisson were to be arrested. My mother said at once that she would follow me to prison, and my father assured us that he would not abandon us; they persisted in this generous resolve in spite of all our endeavours. M. de Marigny also declared that he was resolved to share M. de Lescure's fate.

"The gendarmes still held their pistols in their hands; two placed themselves at my side and followed me step by step. I begged them to let me go upstairs to change my dress, making the remark that I could quite easily have tried to run away or to hide myself when they arrived, had I wished. With difficulty I persuaded them to stay outside my door.... When the men saw that we were polite to them, that the house was inhabited only by women and old men, and that our servants had gone to the *tirage*, they began to calm down. A few words of my mother's touched them greatly. I was imploring her not to accompany us, but one of the gendarmes said: 'In any case, Madame would have had to come, for the order includes all suspected persons.' 'You wish

then to deprive me of the pleasure of sacrificing myself for my daughter?' was her reply."

By degrees the men became quite friendly, and informed them that the order for their arrest had been given ten days before, but the authorities thought they could not trust to the gendarmes of the neighbourhood, who had shown their dislike to be the bearers of it, so they had waited for the arrival of some fresh regiments who were being sent to oppose the Royalists. When the party reached Bressuire in their carriage drawn by bullocks, the gendarmes silenced the mob who were shouting "à l'Aristocrate," by saying it would be very fortunate if all citizens were as good as the prisoners. They also saved them from being sent on to the Château of Forêt-sur-Sêvre, where there were fears of a massacre, and obtained leave for them to remain at Bressuire. A municipal officer, an honest man, who was also the de Lescures' grocer, offered to keep them in his house, and this was permitted.

M. de Lescuré went to headquarters where, as "he was so much respected in the country, the officers were quite upset and apologised for having had him arrested. They declared that the order had been given as much for his own safety as on account of any suspicions there might be regarding him."

In reply M. de Lescure inquired if they had anything positive to reproach him with, and asked to be brought to trial if they had. "We established ourselves, all five," says Mme. de Lescure, "in two little rooms belonging to the municipal officer. He advised us not to show ourselves at the windows, not

to come downstairs—in short, to try and cause ourselves to be forgotten as much as possible. It is probable that these precautions saved our lives.... two days later the regiment that was stationed at Bressuire left to attack the rebels at Aubiers. Two thousand five hundred men passed below our windows singing the Marseillaise in chorus, to the beating of drums. I never heard anything more impressive or more terrible."

Next day brought rumours that the Royalists were defeated, and that M. de la Rochejaquelein was being besieged in his castle of Durbellière; but presently a contrary alarm arose and it was said that the Royalists were advancing on Bressuire. This rumour cheered the prisoners, and they began to hope again. In fact, M. de la Rochejaquelein had gone through strange experiences since he had left Clisson. He had joined the Royalist forces near Chollet, and at a moment of defeat, just when they had been driven back upon Tiffauges, in spite of the presence of their chiefs—Bonchamps, d'Elbée, Stofflet, and the rest. The latter all agreed in assuring Henri de la Rochejaquelein that all was lost, there was hardly any powder left, and the army must dissolve. Saddened by this disaster, he made his way alone to Saint Aubin on the same day that the Republicans left Bressuire. So far there was no one to lead the peasants of this part of the country; those who could had gone to join the forces in Anjou; there seemed nothing to be done here for the cause, but with the news of *Monsieur Henri's* arrival, hope returned to the poor people and they flocked in

crowds to welcome him and to implore him to place himself at their head. They assured him that if he consented, the country would rise and ten thousand men would be at his orders by the next day. Without hesitation he agreed to command them, and during the night the parishes of Les Aubiers, Saint Aubin, Echaubroignes, Cerqueux, etc., sent in their contingents till the promised number of men was nearly complete; but the poor men had but few guns and were mainly armed with sticks, scythes, etc. Fortunately a supply of gunpowder was discovered and secured.

Next morning Henri addressed his little army in the following words: "My friends, if my father were here you would trust him. As for me, I am but a child, but by my courage I will show myself worthy to command you. If I advance, follow me; if I retreat, kill me; if I die, avenge me." In reply the men cheered him enthusiastically. The youthful commander now wanted some breakfast, and while some of the men were searching for white bread for him, he took a bit of their brown bread and began to eat with them. This little incident, says Mme. de Lescure, unawares to him, touched the men very much.

In spite of their zeal, these poor men were a little frightened; most of them had not been under fire, while others had been already defeated. However, they advanced on Les Aubiers which the *Blues* had occupied on the previous evening. The peasants, keeping behind hedges, silently surrounded the village, while M. de la Rochejaquelein with a

dozen good shots made his way into a garden near where the Republican soldiers were stationed ready for battle. Hidden by the hedge he began to fire, supported by his men, and being an expert marksman, nearly every shot told. The enemy, tired of being shot at by an unseen foe, made an effort to change their formation. Seeing this, Henri called out to his followers, "See, my friends, they are flying!" The latter lost no time; they leaped over the hedges in all directions, redoubling their cries of *Vive le Roi*. The Republicans, thus taken by surprise, turned and fled, leaving their sole artillery, two small guns, behind them, and were pursued by the Royalists till within half a league of Bressuire. Such were to be the tactics generally displayed by the Vendeans, especially at the beginning of the war: a silent assembly of troops behind the hedges, a fusillade from all sides, and at the smallest sign of flight on the part of the enemy a rush of men uttering loud cries. The peasants made first for the cannon; the strongest and most active secured them to *prevent them from doing harm*, as they said among themselves. The commanders always led the way on these occasions: this was essential to encourage the men, who were sometimes a little timid at the beginning of an attack.

This kind of warfare seems strange, but it was singularly appropriate to the country, and it must be remembered that neither officers nor men had any military training or knowledge. "Yet it was these who, with their courage and enthusiasm, and with talents which a rapid experience developed, made

the Republic tremble, conquered part of Europe, obtained an honourable peace and defended their cause with more success and glory than all the allied Powers."

In this method of warfare the Republicans suffered infinitely more than the Royalists, by being more exposed during the engagement and still more in defeat; for, being unacquainted with the country, they constantly lost their way and came on Vendean villages where they were at the mercy of their enemies, while the latter force could melt away, as we before described, and find their way home by paths known to themselves alone, cheered by the thought of shortly rejoining their comrades, and repeating confidently: "*Vive le roi quand même.*"

When the de Lescures heard of the victory of Les Aubiers they expected the Royalist troops to enter Bressuire, but M. de la Rochejaquelein felt it to be his first duty to assist the troops whom he had left in Anjou in a hopeless condition. He and his men therefore marched all night to rejoin MM. de Bonchamps, d'Elbée, Cathelineau, taking with him the cannon and ammunition which he had captured, as well as provisions for the army. In Anjou the men were beginning to recover from their defeat and to rejoin with fresh ardour; and now came a succession of victories for the Royalist troops. Chollet, Vihiers, Chemilly were retaken and the *Blues* beaten everywhere, without much loss to themselves. But we must return to the de Lescures and their friends.

CHAPTER V.

THE *GRANDE ARMÉE* AND ITS OFFICERS.

MEANWHILE terrible things were taking place at Bressuire. Four hundred Marseillais had been sent to reinforce the garrison, and these men determined on the massacre of a body of unfortunate peasants who had been seized and brought into the town on suspicion of favouring the "rebels." In spite of the horror of the townspeople and even of the orders of the Republican General, Quétineau, the wretches forced the prison and took the prisoners—eleven hundred—outside the town, where they were killed. "The peasants were hacked to death with sabres," says Mme. de Lescure, "they died on their knees praying and repeating *Vive le Roi*." The de Lescures expected the same fate, but mercifully the Marseillais were not aware of their presence at Bressuire. The *patriots* of the town liked them too much to betray them, and their host was full of zeal and anxiety for their safety. Two or three days later, he brought a person called Lasalle, a commissary of the department, to see them, who, while showing a friendly disposition yet harangued them on the necessity of arresting the nobles and on the Republican plans for

killing or banishing the inhabitants of La Vendée and repeopling the country with *patriots*, etc., concluding with these words, addressed to M. de Lescure: "It is a son of M. de la Rochejaquelein who commanded at Aubiers; do you know him?" "Yes." "He is even a relation of yours." "That is true."

"I trembled for fear during this dialogue," relates Mme. de Lescure, "but M. de Lescure's sangfroid and simple manner prevented Lasalle from suspecting anything.... The town and the army were so occupied by fear that no one thought of us. The confusion which reigned in all minds and in all undertakings saved us as if by miracle. Troops arrived continually, and at times panic and terror seized the inhabitants; these were our happy moments, for we thought the town was going to be taken and we put aside the idea of the danger such an invasion might bring us." M. de Lescure could think of nothing else, hoping then to join the Royalist army.

It was at this time that the Abbé Desessarts—afterwards well known—appeared at Bressuire in the dress of a Republican soldier. He had been seized at Poitiers on account of his correspondence with the emigrés, and was given the choice of death or of entering the army. He and M. de Lescure met secretly and planned how they could join the Vendeans. At last on May 1st (1793) news arrived that the Royalist army had taken Argenton-le-Château and were marching on Bressuire. A scene of terror and confusion followed, and General Quétineau, unable to rally his troops, determined to retreat on Thouars, while most of the inhabitants of

the town decided to follow him, or to take refuge in other towns.

"During this retreat we awaited our fate anxiously, not dreaming we could be entirely forgotten. We had closed our shutters and each time a company of soldiers halted before our door we imagined they had come to take us. At last, little by little, the town became like a desert. They had not thought of us, and we were free."

Their kindly host now came and begged them to shelter him at Clisson, remarking that the *brigands* liked the nobles and respected the Châteaux; some of the townspeople claimed the same privilege. Rather against his better judgment, M. de Lescure acceded to their request, and sent to Clisson for carts to convey them thither.

At eleven o'clock he heard that the town was evacuated and nearly empty, and they all started to return home, M. and Mme. de Lescure walking on in front. "We arrived alone at Clisson, where they could hardly believe in our deliverance.... The Abbé Desessarts, whom in future we always called *le Chevalier*, had managed to desert, and rejoined us the same day, and the Château was filled with refugees from Bressuire."

About mid-day the news came that the Royalists had changed the direction of their march and were not advancing on Bressuire. This decided M. de Lescure. He sent word to the peasants of the neighbourhood, giving them a rendezvous and telling them they would find officers ready to lead them, while he himself determined to go to Chatillon and bring back

ammunition to the place of meeting, in the hopes that his force would be able to take Bressuire before the Republicans returned.

"We began to make all our preparations," continues our heroine. "M. de Lescure confided his project only to me, to M. de Marigny and to the Chevalier Desessarts. My parents' sentiments were the same as ours, but they had not the same youthful ardour, and we hid ourselves from them for we dreaded their reflections and wise counsels. We four shut ourselves up in a room in the middle of the Château which was full of refugee *patriots*. The gentlemen prepared their arms, and I made white cockades."

About four o'clock M. de Lescure told Mme. de Donnissan that he was about to start for Chatillon; she was alarmed and asked what was to happen if the Republicans returned to Bressuire. "To-morrow at daybreak," he replied, "I shall be master of Bressuire; to-night forty parishes will rise by my orders." The poor lady was overcome at his news, and in vain attempted to dissuade him. M. de Lescure was fully resolved, and he and M. de Marigny set off. They had hardly started, however, when a trembling *patriot* brought word that the Royalists had already entered Bressuire. Mme. de Lescure sent a messenger after her husband, who returned at once and found her talking to the refugees who were very frightened; but at the same moment one of the farmers came in and told them that his master's bullocks had been taken by the "brigands," but that they had undertaken to return them to him. "So I see you are right," remarked M. de Lescure,

smiling; "it seems that the brigands love the nobles. I will go and fetch my oxen and save your property; remain here and have no fear."

When her husband had started for the second time Mme. de Lescure bethought herself that if the Royalist troop was composed of strangers they might not approve of the shelter given to the Republican refugees, so she persuaded the latter to shut themselves up in one of the wings of the house and to take off their tri-coloured cockades. "I was alone in the courtyard, more from agitation than courage. After a few minutes I heard the galloping of horses and cries of *Vive le Roi*. It was M. de Lescure and M. de Marigny who were returning with Henri de la Rochejaquelein whom they had met with three other cavaliers."

At the cry of *Vive le Roi*, everyone in the château rushed out. Henri threw himself into our arms, weeping and crying, "So I have delivered you!" The refugees were much alarmed, and threw themselves at the feet of their hosts, but Henri entirely approved of their receiving shelter, and Mme. de Lescure amusingly remarks that he was even asked to embrace some of the women to "reconcile them to these brigands, whom they looked upon as monsters." M. de Lescure set off again shortly for Bressuire, and returned the next day with a troop of eighty men, among whom was a young man, M. de Beauvolliers, who had left the Republican army, in which he had been forcibly enrolled, to join the Royalists. He became M. de Lescure's aide-de-camp, and "was always brave and gentle."

The other officers had not all so distinguished a military appearance as he had. "Their horses were of all sizes and colours; there were sabots instead of boots; guns and sabres fastened with string. Some had white cockades, others black or green. All wore a Sacred Heart badge on their coats, and a rosary at their buttonhole." This little force was on its road to make a demonstration at Parthenay, in order to conceal the fact that the main army was marching on Thouars. While these good men were breakfasting, M. de Lescure related that at Bressuire he had been received with open arms, he had been admitted to the Council of War, and had been treated as the chief of the parishes of his canton, adding that MM. de Marigny and Desessarts were awaited impatiently. Officers were indeed greatly needed.

About midday MM. de Lescure and de la Rochejaquelein started for Parthenay, and Mme. de Lescure and the others for Bressuire—leaving the refugees to enjoy the hospitality of Clisson as long as they wished, for they were all quiet, respectable people.

"When we got near the town," continues Mme. de Lescure, "we began to meet the Vendéens. They knew who we were and cried, *Vive le Roi*. We repeated it with them, weeping with emotion. I perceived about fifty on their knees before a calvary. Nothing could distract them from their prayers."

Bressuire was occupied by about twenty thousand men, and there was indescribable joy among them and touching hopes that the *emigrés* would come to help to re-establish the King and religion. The bells were rung and a great fire made on the *Place*, in which was

burnt the Tree of Liberty and the official papers of the town.

Mme. de Lescure walked about with other women, and made friends with the Vendeans, who were proud to feel that they had rescued her from the enemy. They introduced her to the famous cannon *Marie-Jeanne*: it has quite a history of its own, and is often referred to in the annals of the war. This cannon, which had been taken at Chollet and came from the Château de Richelieu, where it had belonged to the famous cardinal, was a fine piece of work, much ornamented, and bearing inscriptions glorifying Louis XIII. and Richelieu. The Vendeans attached a miraculous value to *Marie-Jeanne*, and believed it to be a certain pledge of victory. "I found this gun on the *Place*; it was adorned with flowers and ribbons. The peasants embraced it, and asked me to do likewise, which I did willingly.[1] In the evening I was much surprised and edified to see all the soldiers on their knees answering the rosary which one of them said aloud, and I was told that they never omitted to say these prayers three times a day.

"Their bravery and enthusiasm," continues Mme.

[1] Marie-Jeanne cost dear to both the Vendeans and the Republicans. It was taken and retaken five or six times. A modern French writer thus alludes to it: "Le cannon fleuri et enrubanné que excitait ainsi le naïf enthousiasme des Vendéens et sur laquelle la Marquise de la Rochejaquelein posa un jour ses lèvres fremissantes est aujourd'hui au Musée d'artillerie des *Invalides*. J'ai voulu aller le voir et je vous avouerai naïvement que je n'ai pu le regarder sans émotion et que j'ai voulu moi aussi poser mes lèvres sur ce bronze auguste, dont la voix tantot joyeuse comme un cri de victoire, tantot triste comme un cri d'alarme, retentit si longtemps pour Dieu et pour le Roi, sur les champs de bataille de La Vendée."—Em. Terrade.

de Lescure, "had not, speaking generally, changed their natural gentleness of character. Their love and respect for religion, though rather unenlightened, had nothing fierce about it. During the first months of the war, before the atrocities perpetrated by the Republicans had inspired the desire for vengeance and reprisals, the Vendean army was as touching by its virtues as by its courage.... They took towns without pillaging them; they did not ill-treat the inhabitants or exact ransoms from them; the inhabitants of the country at least were never guilty of these excesses.... In M. de Charrette's army and in Lower Poitou things were not like this, and the war was often conducted in an atrocious manner."[1]

While Mme. de Lescure was at Bressuire she lodged in a house full of soldiers. One day two cavaliers had a dispute in the street below her windows; "one of them drew his sabre and touched the other gently; the latter was about to return the blow when my father, who was close to them, seized his arm and said: 'Jesus Christ forgave his murderers, and a soldier of the Catholic army wishes to kill his comrade!' The men embraced on the spot—indeed, I never heard of any duels. The war was so active and so full of danger that no one thought of showing off his courage, except against the enemy."

The Royalist army occupying Bressuire was composed of men from Anjou and Poitou. The force

[1] We have given this extract as it relates to a question which has been much discussed, but in the earlier part of the *Mémoires* Mme. de Lescure distinctly says that after the affair of Machecout "no crime of any kind sullied the glory" of M. de Charrette's army.

raised by M. de Lescure was now incorporated with it, and together they formed what was called the *Grande Armée*, and generally numbered about twenty thousand men; while on important occasions this force could be doubled. This division generally acted in conjunction with that of M. de Bonchamps, which was recruited from the parishes which lie near Saint Florent on the Loire, and M. de Charrette's division —which at most counted twenty thousand men—lay in the *Marais* and along the coast.

M. de Bonchamps, who was one of the best and most famous of the Vendean commanders, was in the prime of life and had served with distinction in India under M. de Suffrein. "He had," says Mme. de Lescure, "a reputation for valour and talent which I have never heard contested; he was recognised to be the cleverest of the generals; his troops were considered to be better trained than the rest; he had no ambition, no pretensions; he was gentle and easy to live with and much loved in the *Grande Armée*, which had entire confidence in him—but he was unlucky in battle; I do not think he ever went into action without being wounded, so that his men were often deprived of his presence."

Mme. de Lescure, who gives us excellent little pen sketches of the different generals, describes General d'Elbée, who was then in supreme command of the *Grande Armée*, as "very devout, enthusiastic, and extraordinarily courageous and calm." His feelings, however, were easily hurt and he was somewhat choleric; his piety was very real, but he showed it rather affectedly and was apt to preach to his men,

who, although much attached to him—as was everyone else—laughed at him also in a friendly way and dubbed him *General Providence*.

Stofflet, who was at the head of the parishes near Maulevrier, was an Alsatian; he had been a soldier, and at the time of the rising was gamekeeper at the Château of Maulevrier. He was "big and strong, active, intelligent and brave." The men did not care for him, but they obeyed him better than anyone. Later on, unfortunately, his ambition brought disaster to the Royalist cause.

Cathelineau, whose name will ever be beloved, was a very different character. He was only a simple peasant, and before the war followed the trade of a pedlar. "Never was a man more gentle, more modest or better altogether. He was looked up to the more because he always put himself in the lowest place. He was extraordinarily clever; his eloquence carried all before it, and he possessed a natural genius for war and for directing the men. His age was thirty-four. The peasants adored him and had the greatest respect for him; for long he had had a reputation for great piety and regularity, so much so that the soldiers called him the *Saint of Anjou*, and would place themselves near him in battle, if possible, thinking they could not be wounded by the side of such a holy man.

When M. de Lescure joined the army he was surnamed the *Saint of Poitou*, and the same sort of religious veneration was felt for him as for Cathelineau. Mme. de Lescure tells us that her husband's courage was of that calm order which she had described

as his youthful characteristic; "even when he showed himself rash, he remained grave and reflective." He had always been interested in the science of war and was the best-read officer in those subjects among the Royalists. As he alone understood something of fortification, his advice was much relied on when the Republican defences were to be attacked.

He was loved and respected, says his wife, but thought to be a little obstinate, and then she adds these heartfelt words about his great characteristic—mercy: "His humanity was something angelic and marvellous in a war in which the generals fought like common soldiers, and in the mêlée; M. de Lescure killed no one; he never allowed a prisoner to be killed or to be ill-treated if he could stop it, even when the terrible massacres of the Republicans led some of our gentlest officers to use reprisals. . . . One day a man shot directly at him; he only put aside the gun, saying: 'Take away this poor man'; but his men were so indignant that they killed him behind M. de Lescure's back. When he saw this M. de Lescure was more angry than the men had ever seen him; it was the only time, he told me, that he ever swore. The number of those whose lives he saved was prodigious, and his memory is cherished and venerated all over La Vendée; of all those who became famous in the war, none acquired a purer fame."

Henri de la Rochejaquelein's command extended over the parishes round Chatillon. "His courage was ardent and rash, and brought him the name of *l'intrépide*." He was reproached with exposing

himself unnecessarily in battle and in the pursuit of the enemy, and of not taking a more prominent part in the counsels of war; this was true, for he said nothing on these occasions and sometimes even went to sleep! But the men loved him, and to all the reproaches made to him, the young commander would reply: "Why should people wish me to be a general? I only want to be a hussar to have the pleasure of fighting." In spite of this military ardour, he was ever gentle and humane, and no one had more pity and kindness for the vanquished.

In spite of their different natures, MM. de Lescure and de la Rochejaquelein "were united like brothers. Their names were never separated, their mutual affection and their courage were famous throughout the army. They had the same simplicity, the same gentleness, the same complete absence of vanity or ambition. Henri would say, 'If we re-establish the King on the throne, he is sure to give me a regiment of hussars'; and M. de Lescure, 'He will certainly let me live quietly at Clisson!'"

M. de Donnissan, although he possessed the dignity of *Maréchal de Camp*, did not accept a command. He was looked up to with much respect in the Council, but he kept in the background. His is a sad and dignified figure in the Royalist army; his age and experience prevented him from sharing in the enthusiasm of some of the officers or their happy illusions, and, as his daughter tells us, he clearly foresaw a fatal ending to the undertaking.

The army, as we have noted before, was never assembled for more than three or four days at a

time. Once the expedition had succeeded—or failed—the peasants could not be kept together. They returned home, and the chiefs were left with a few hundred men only—deserters or strangers, and the troops of cavalry of a sort which they had formed. But as soon as it was needed the force quickly reformed—word was sent to each parish, the tocsin was rung, and the men came to the church where an order something to this effect was read: "In the name of God and the King—such and such a parish is invited to send as many men as possible to such a place, at such a day, at such an hour; provisions must be brought." The chief in whose command the parish was situated signed the order, and it was obeyed with *empressement.*

Each man brought bread with him, and the generals took care to have some made also. Meat was distributed to the troops—this charge being met by the gentlemen and the large proprietors; but in fact the peasants themselves sent generous provisions of bread to meet the army on its march, and food for the soldiers, while the rich gave all they could. The army possessed neither carts nor baggage, and there was of course no question of tents, but particular care was taken of the sick; all the wounded, whether Royalist or Republican, were transported to Saint Laurent-sur-Sèvre, where the Sisters of La Sagesse had their mother-house, and as all the Sisters who had been turned out elsewhere had sought refuge here, there were more than a hundred of them to nurse the soldiers, in which work of mercy they were assisted by the Missionary Fathers of the Holy Ghost.

When a battle was beginning and the cannon could be heard, the tocsin was rung in the neighbouring villages, and the remaining inhabitants assembled in the churches to pray for success, and as each village bell rang out in succession, this occurred all over the country. "So that throughout La Vendée there was, at the same moment, but one thought and one desire; each one waited, praying to God, for the issue of a battle on which depended the fate of all."

After describing these characteristics of the war, Mme. de Lescure tells us of the modest hopes entertained by the generality of the officers and men, in the event of success crowning their endeavours, and we must here again use her own words.

"They desired that the name of Vendée, which had been accidentally bestowed on them, should be preserved as the title of a province to be formed of the *Bocage*, and which should have its own administration.

"They would have asked the King to honour their wild and distant country by a visit, and to permit, in memory of the war, that the white flag should float for ever over every parish church, and that a body of Vendeans should be allowed to join the King's guard.

"I am very glad to show," continues the writer, "in recounting our hopes and wishes that the war of La Vendée bore a character of such simplicity, reasonableness and probity, differing in this from nearly all other civil wars, where such purity of motives is rarely to be found."

CHAPTER VI.

VENDEAN VICTORIES AT THOUARS AND FONTENAY.

It is about this time that M. de Bouëre joined the *Grande Armée*, and it is very tantalising to find no trace, either in the *Mémoires* of Mme. de Lescure or in those of Mme. de Bouëre, of these ladies having met during the war. The latter was a little younger than our heroine—both underwent the same dangers and sufferings, and in after years kept up a correspondence on the subject dearest to their memory. In Mme. de Bouëre's *Mémoires* she gives a letter addressed to her in 1841 by Mme. de la Rochejaquelein, as she now was, and this and the following little extracts from some unpublished letters are all that we possess relating to the friendship which united these two brave women. In 1822 Mme. de la Rochejaquelein writes thus: "I repeat with all my heart that I have found in you a true Vendéenne of the first war—one who has preserved the nobility and purity of sentiments of that glorious epoch."

In 1833 she writes again to Mme. de Bouëre: "I am touched to tears by your letter, my dear comrade; how well it depicts your soul—it is truly the letter of a Vendéenne *de vieille-roche*," and when, in her

advancing years, our heroine became almost blind, she still kept up with her old friend. "I am enchanted," she says in a letter dictated in 1844, "to see by your charming writing that you are not yet growing old. God be praised! As for me, I am about your age but my sight gets worse and worse."

To return, however, to the position at Bressuire in 1793. We find that Mme. de Lescure and her party, consisting of her mother, aunt and two or three others, left there on May 4th, and went to the Château of Boulaye, where they remained for a time while M. de Lescure was with the troops. As she was not, at this time, on the theatre of war, as she expresses it, Mme. de Lescure omits descriptions of some of the engagements, but of the taking of Thouars she gives a full account. This victory had a special interest for her—for "it was the first occasion on which M. de Lescure took part in the fighting, and he then made for himself such a reputation for valour that he suddenly acquired a great influence in the army."

The Republican general, Quétineau, entered Thouars on May 3rd, and, not expecting to be attacked, took no measures to defend his position. On the next evening he was warned that the Vendeans were approaching, and hastily took some precautions. Thouars stands on a height, and is almost surrounded by the river Thoué. This stream, which the Royalists had to cross before they could attack the town, ran between high banks and was rendered still more difficult of access by the presence of mill dams.

There were four points by which the troops could advance pretty near, however, and the different generals undertook to direct the attack at these various places; MM. de Lescure and de la Rochejaquelein being sent to a bridge at about half a league from the town. They and M. de Bonchamps who was in command at a ford, further down, called the *Gué aux Biches*, were to commence the cannonade.

For six hours the opposing forces kept up a fire of artillery and musketry, but owing to the distance it had not much effect, and by eleven o'clock the Vendeans were short of powder. Henri de la Rochejaquelein hurried off to get some, leaving M. de Lescure in command; the latter, soon afterwards, perceived signs of wavering among the Republicans. So he seized a gun, called to the soldiers to follow him, and, rushing down the slope, arrived on the bridge in the midst of bullets and cannon balls. None of the peasants had dared to follow him; he turned back to rally and exhort them to come on, showing them the example by again returning to the bridge—but he was still alone except for one man, and his clothes were riddled with bullets. At last he made a third effort, and just then MM. de la Rochejaquelein and de Forest arrived and hastened to his assistance. They all crossed the bridge and now the peasants crowded after them. A moment later M. de Bonchamps succeeded in fording the *Gué aux Biches*, which was defended by the National Guard of Airvaux; these brave men, not knowing that their side was losing and that they were now cut off, refused to yield and were all killed.

When the other Republicans had retreated inside the walls of the town M. de la Rochejaquelein distinguished himself by scaling the wall on the shoulders of a soldier, and after making a breach the Royalist troops precipitated themselves into Thouars. After long hesitation, the enemy, who seem to have had a strange dread of falling into the hands of the *Brigands*, as they termed them, resolved to capitulate. General Quétineau assured the civil authorities that they could no longer resist. One of them in despair exclaimed: "If only I had a pistol I would blow out my brains." "Quétineau with great *sang froid* took one from his belt and presented it to him; the poor administrator then resigned himself to the capitulation, and they sent their submission to M. d'Elbeé.... There was no disaster, not a citizen was ill-treated, not a house pillaged. The peasants went first to the churches to ring the bells and to pray." They burnt the tree of liberty and the municipal papers, according to a custom which seems always to have given them particular pleasure.

All the Vendean chiefs were lodged in the same house as General Quétineau, and M. de Lescure, who had known him previously and was aware that he was an honest man, invited him to his room, where they had the following conversation. Quétineau began thus: "Monsieur, I saw your closed shutters as we were leaving Bressuire. You thought you were forgotten—but it was not through forgetfulness that I left you your freedom." M. de Lescure expressed his great gratitude and added, "*You* are free now—you can go—but I advise you to remain with us.

You do not share our views so you need not fight: you shall be a prisoner on parole, and everyone will treat you well. If you return to the Republicans they will not forgive you for this capitulation, although it was absolutely necessary. I offer you a refuge from their vengeance."

Quétineau, however, would not be persuaded to quit his colours, and this brave general, as M. de Lescure foresaw, eventually paid for his loyalty by his head.[1] The peasant soldiers could not at all understand so much consideration being shown to a Republican general, and were much surprised at his lodging in the same house as their officers. When M. de Bonchamps' men heard that Quétineau was actually to sleep in the same room as their commander they were horrified and ventured to remonstrate. As M. de Bonchamps was displeased at their remarks, they took the matter into their own hands, and some of them silently entered the house at night and established themselves on the stair-case and before the door of the bedroom. M. de Bonchamps' gamekeeper even crept into the room and slept at the foot of his master's bed.

The success at Thouars brought recruits to the Royalist cause, among whom were some officers of distinction, who proved a great gain to the Vendean army. After mentioning Messieurs de Beauvolliers (ainé), de la Ville de Baugé, de la Marsonnière and de Sanglier, Mme. de Lescure adds a description of two very youthful new adherents. "The Chevalier de Mondyon, a child of fourteen, also joined the army.

[1] See *Mémoires* de Mme. de Bouëre, pp. 44-5.

He arrived from Paris, where he had escaped from school, and had manufactured a false passport in order to come to La Vendée and fight for the King: he had a charming face, ardent courage and much vivacity of character.

"M. de Langerie was still younger, as he was not yet thirteen, and at first efforts were made to prevent his taking part in the campaign; but no one could stop him. At the first engagement his horse was shot under him. After this he was made aide-de-camp to the Chevalier de Cassaigne who was in command at Chatillon, but he deserted from this post where there was nothing to do, procured a horse and rejoined the army." The elder of these boy-soldiers was wounded at Châtaigneraie, which was taken by the Royalists soon afterwards.[1]

The peasants had now been under arms for several days, and some insisted on returning home, as we have before described, so that for the next attack—on Fontenay—there were but a thousand men available, and they were beaten. M. d'Elbée was wounded on this occasion, and most of the guns were taken by the enemy, including *Marie Jeanne*. It was at this moment of defeat and discouragement that the curious figure of the Abbé de Folleville, who called himself Bishop of Agra, becomes prominent in the annals of the war. There is much mystery about him, and Mme. de Lescure herself cannot tell us clearly his object in deceiving the whole Royalist army.

[1] When the Royalists entered this town M. de Bouëre found a guillotine erected in the courtyard of an inn, which had evidently been in use recently. He gave an order for its destruction, which was obeyed with *empressement* by his men.—MME. DE BOUËRE, p. 46.

"It was after the reverse at Fontenay," she says, "that the army reaped particular benefit from the presence of the pretended Bishop of Agra. He reached Châtillon on the very day of the defeat. All the bells were rung, everyone crowded to see him; he gave them his blessing, pontificated in the church, and the peasants were wild with delight; the joy of having a bishop with them restored all their ardour, and they no longer thought of their defeat."

The army now reformed, and, reinforced by M. de Bonchamps' division, returned on their steps, and they once more marched on Fontenay. Before the attack the soldiers received absolution and their generals spoke words of encouragement. "Allons, my children, we have no powder, once more we must capture the cannon with our sticks; we must find *Marie Jeanne*. Who will go first?"

M. de Lescure's men, finding a calvary on their road, knelt down to pray, within reach of the enemy's guns, but their commander would not let them be disturbed. The Royalists won a great victory this time, and had the joy of liberating some of their comrades who, with M. de Marsonnière, were awaiting execution in the prison. *Marie Jeanne* was also recaptured by General Forest and brought back in triumph.

This success, the most brilliant yet won by the Vendeans, procured them thirty cannon, many guns and ammunition of all kinds, besides two cases of *assignats;* the men did not realise the importance of this paper money, and tore up or burnt the contents of one box, but the second—which contained about

900,000 francs' worth—was rescued, and the commanders, in order to make the notes available for the army, had *Bon, au nom du Roi*, with the signatures of the Superior Council, written on the back of each note.

They had also to come to a decision here about their prisoners, of whom three or four thousand were taken at Fontenay. So far there was no rule among the Republicans that the Vendean prisoners should be shot, so there was no question of reprisals, and the Royalists had told these men that if they would yield they should not be hurt. The prisoners could not be kept or guarded in an army which was always on the move, and to let them go back on *parole* was a risky matter. M. de Donnissan therefore suggested that the men should have their hair cut short so that if they were taken in arms again they would be recognised. This quaint measure was adopted and gave great amusement to the Vendeans.

The commanders spent three days at Fontenay, occupied in making arrangements for the future. Their victory and the taking of this town, the most important in the Department, seemed to give a consistency and meaning to the rising which it had hitherto lacked, and they felt it necessary to mark the fact by creating a Council of Administration whose headquarters should be at Châtillon. The *soi-disant* Bishop of Agra was elected president; M. Desessarts père vice-president; M. Carrière, advocate, of Fontenay, procureur du Roi; and M. Pierre Jagault—a Benedictine monk—secretary. The rest

of the Council was composed of ecclesiastics—including the famous Abbé Bernier and the Curé of Saint Laurent—lawyers, and a few gentlemen whose age or health prevented their joining the army. In addition to these M. de Beauvolliers ainé was named treasurer-general of the army and head of the commissariat.

When this business was settled the Royalists left Fontenay, having done no harm to the town, and returned to the *Bocage*, and MM. de Lescure and de la Rochejaquelein went to Boulaye to rejoin Mme. de Lescure. Here they received news that some Republican soldiers had been seen at Argenton-le-Château, and presently the news came that a force of the enemy was assembling at Saumur. The Convention had begun to consider the Vendean rising as a very serious matter, and were now determined to oppose it with vigour. The preparations were made with extreme rapidity. "The troops and cannon travelled *en poste* and came in five days from Paris to Saumur. Forty thousand men, of which half were composed of regiments of the line, now occupied Saumur, Montreuil, Thouars, Doué and Vihiers." Stirring times were at hand, and this time Stofflet and some of his men were the first to approach the enemy. They entered Vihiers, where they met no resistance, as the *Blues* had fallen back on another position. Thinking all was secure, Stofflet sent word to MM. de Lescure and de la Rochejaquelein that he was waiting for them, and they started to join him.

Meanwhile the Republicans came back in large numbers, and Stofflet had to retire hurriedly and

was unable to warn M. de Lescure. The enemy, resorting to a *ruse*, surprised the Royalist forces after their entry into the town by a heavy fusillade in which M. de Lescure's horse was wounded. The peasants rushed on the Republicans who, little expecting an attack, lost courage and, leaving their cannon, fled towards Doué. The *Grande Armée* coming up, now assembled at Vihiers and, marching on Doué, defeated the enemy again and took possession of the town. On this occasion two hussar officers left the Republican army to join the Royalists, of whom one was M. de Boispréau who afterwards distinguished himself.

It was evident that Saumur must be the next point of attack, but it was determined to approach the town by going first to Montreuil-Bellay, where the communications between Saumur and Thouars—where lay a large contingent of the enemy—could be cut off. All happened as had been anticipated, and General Salomon arrived at Montreuil with five or six thousand men, little imagining that the town was already in possession of the Royalists. "My father," says Mme. de Lescure, "had caused a battery of artillery to be placed behind the gates, which suddenly opened a deadly fire on the Blues. At the same time the de Bonchamps division, which was posted in the gardens outside the town, attacked their flank. Complete confusion ensued and the Blues fled in disorder along the road to Thouars, abandoning their guns and baggage. They did not even stop at Thouars, so great was their panic. This affair was, however, murderous also for our army as, in the

dark, our men fired on the Bonchamps division." The attack on Saumur could now no longer be postponed, but such an important incident in the war deserves a fresh chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VENDEANS ATTACK SAUMUR AND NANTES.

M. DE LA ROCHEJAQUELEIN proposed that detachments of cavalry should be sent on towards Saumur in order to alarm the enemy and to keep them in expectation of an attack all night. He intended to accompany them, and the rest of the army was to follow next day. However, the peasants were so excited by their success that they crowded after *M. Henri's* small force, "and in a moment the whole army found itself on the road, crying, *Vive le Roi, nous allons à Saumur.*" As the chiefs could not stop them, an immediate attack was resolved upon. M. de Lescure agreed to command the left wing and to make for the Pont de Fouchard. M. de la Rochejaquelein was to follow the river bank to the Pont Saint Just, while MM. Fleuriot, Stofflet and Desessarts, at the head of the Bonchamps division, directed their efforts from the heights above Thoué so as to approach the Castle of Saumur.

The three attacks were made simultaneously on the morning of June 10th. M. de Lescure was wounded early in the proceedings, and his men retired in a panic; they were rallied, however, by their gallant

commander and won their position. M. de la Rochejaquelein and M. de Baugé succeeded in entering Saumur, and wishing to make the victory complete, they went on through the town in pursuit of the Republican soldiers and presently found themselves alone; "after traversing the town they saw the whole army of *Blues* fleeing in disorder across the great bridge over the Loire; they went behind the theatre and from there Henri fired on the fugitives, while M. de Baugé picked up guns (which had been thrown away) and brought them to him."

These gallant gentlemen went over the bridge in pursuit of the enemy, but returning after a time found to their satisfaction that their men now occupied the town. Owing to the approach of night the Castle was not then attacked, and the next morning its garrison surrendered. The attack on Saumur was not well organised from the military point of view, but it succeeded *quand même*, as we may say, and secured to the Vendeans not only an important position, but the free passage of the Loire, eighty cannon and thousands of guns. The prisoners taken in the last few days' fighting amounted to eleven thousand. These men had their heads shaved and were nearly all allowed to go free.

The Vendeans had sixty men killed and four hundred wounded at Saumur, but presumably the *Blues* lost more, and M. de Bouëre, in speaking of the siege, gives an interesting reason for this; he remarks that the Royalist officers had warned their men that the cuirassiers were impervious to bullets when protected by their armour. "In consequence,

after the fight, it was found," he says, "that nearly all the cavaliers who died in this way had been shot in the neck—this explains why the Republicans always lost far more men than the Royalists." M. de Bouëre notes another interesting little fact, namely, that Santerre arrived at Saumur on the day of its capture but fled hurriedly to Baugé.

General Quétineau was found at Saumur in prison, waiting his trial for the surrender of Thouars, and M. de Lescure had a talk with him and tried, once more, to persuade him to remain with the Royalists. "Well, Quétineau," he said, "you see how the Republicans treat you. Here you are lying under accusation and shut up in prison—you will perish on the scaffold." But Quétineau could not be persuaded to change his decision. He seemed much perturbed, however, at the rumours that the Austrians were masters of Flanders. "You, too, are victorious—a counter-revolution is coming, and France will be dismembered by strangers." M. de Lescure assured him that the Royalists would never permit this and would fight for the defence of the country. "Ah, Monsieur," was Quétineau's reply, "I will then serve with you. I love the glory of my country, and that is my way of being a patriot." This brave and unfortunate man met the fate anticipated by de Lescure. He was sent first to Tours and then to Paris, where he was tried, condemned and executed. His wife could not make up her mind to survive him, so she cried out *Vive le Roi* before the revolutionary tribunal, and she also was sent to the scaffold.

The wound received by M. de Lescure on June 10th caused him much suffering, and as he had remained on horseback for hours afterwards the loss of blood and fatigue brought on fever. He was persuaded to go to the Château of Boulaye to recruit, and we can imagine how thankful his wife must have been to be able to nurse him herself. Before he left Saumur M. de Lescure begged the other officers to come to him and addressed them on a subject of great moment. "Messieurs," he said, "the insurrection is assuming real importance, and our successes have been too great for the army to remain any longer without proper direction. A general-in-chief must be named; as we are not all here, the nomination can only be provisional. I give my vote to M. Cathelineau." "Everyone applauded except the good Cathelineau himself, who was much surprised at being so honoured. My father, MM. de Boisy and du Houx arrived presently and were of the same opinion, and M. d'Elbée, who had been detained by his wound, came two days later and approved what had been done."

Nothing better illustrates the unselfish and loyal spirit of the officers, many of them nobly born, than their choice of Cathelineau to rule over them, but, as we have shown earlier, Cathelineau was rarely gifted, and the men were devoted to him. In this way the choice was also politic, for it encouraged the peasants to even greater loyalty to their cause, and it was a good object lesson to the enemy; as Mme. de Lescure remarks, "Equality reigned much more in the Vendean army than in that of the Republic,"

and the Royalist chiefs were very careful to treat the peasant officers as their equals.

Presently they likewise assumed the same appearance in dress, owing to *M. Henri's* preference for red handkerchiefs. Many of these were supplied to the army, and he generally wore one on his head, one on his neck and several as a waistband to hold his pistols At the battle of Fontenay the *Blues* were heard calling out, "Fire on the red handkerchief." That evening the other chiefs implored Henri to change his costume, but it was convenient, and he refused. So they all adopted the same in order to minimise his danger, and red handkerchiefs became the fashion. This quaint addition to the vest and trousers worn by all alike really gave them quite the air of *brigands*, says Mme. de Lescure, the name bestowed on them by the enemy.

She and Mme. de Donnissan had been at de Boulaye during all these fights. The Château became a sort of headquarters for the Royalists, and Mme. de Lescure was honoured by everyone as the wife of the beloved leader. She was sadly frightened one day, she tells us, when she had gone to Chatillon, and M. de Beaudry, the commandant, visited her in state at the head of two hundred men and, drawing his sword, made her a speech. "I began to cry like a child, not knowing what it was all about... little by little I got accustomed to all the noise they made in the parishes I passed through.' Her little girl had been left with her nurse at Clisson, but after the defeat at Fontenay she was hidden in the house of the Texiers, "who were the best peasants of the parish of Courtay."

"I wanted to have her brought to Boulaye," continues our heroine, "and I went to meet her as far as Pommeraye-sur-Sèvre where our excellent doctor, M. Durand, lived. The roads were impracticable for carriages, so I decided to ride, but I was so frightened that I had a man to hold my bridle all the way. Next day while I was at dinner a courier arrived bringing me a letter from M. de Lescure. I had heard of the affair of Saumur, but they had hid from me that he had been wounded. He had just reached Boulaye and wrote to me himself to reassure me. I was seized by a dreadful trembling and I could not stay away another moment, so I caught a wretched little horse which was, accidentally, in the courtyard, and without giving time for the stirrups to be arranged I set off at a gallop; and in three-quarters of an hour I covered three long leagues of bad roads. I found M. de Lescure up, but he had a violent fever, which continued for some days. Since then I have never again been afraid of riding."

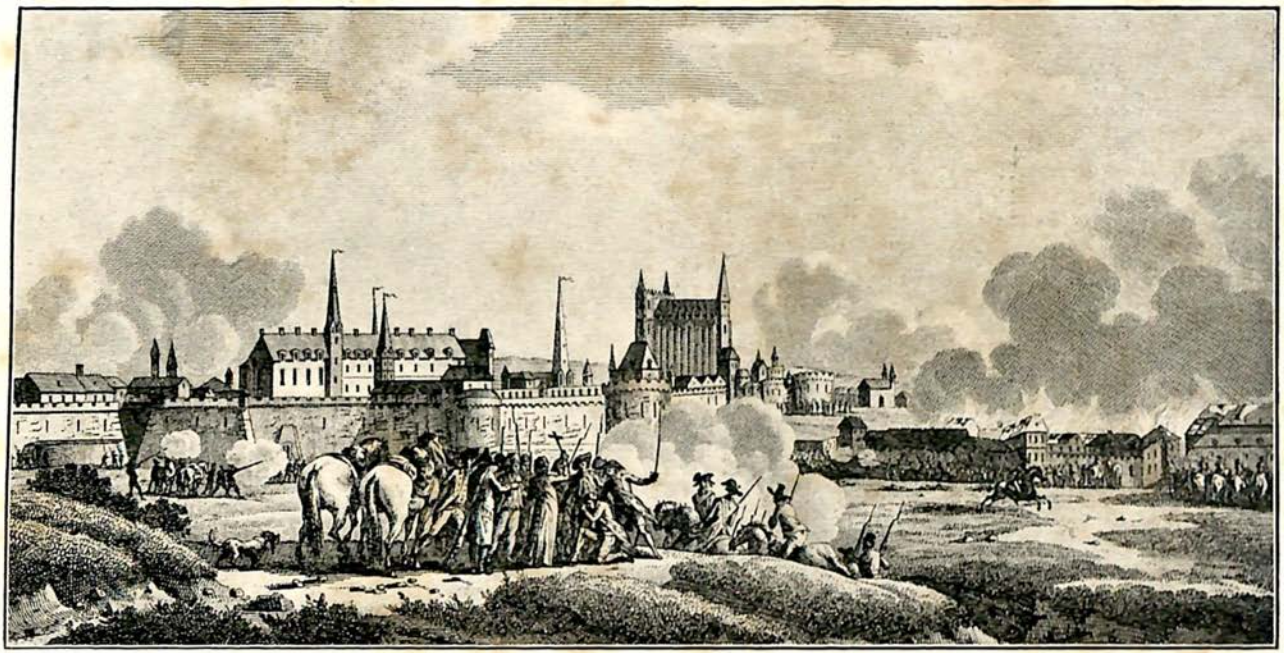
It was at this moment that the *Grande Armée* and M. de Charrette's division determined to join forces. M. de Lescure, in his invalided state at Boulaye, addressed a courteous letter to the general, who responded equally cordially, and it was proposed that the first joint effort should be directed upon Nantes. The young Prince de Talmond now also joined the cause; he was the second son of the Duc de Trémouille. His family had reigned almost as sovereigns for long in Poitou, and as the Duc and his daughter-in-law, the Princesse de Tarente, owned

more than three hundred parishes in the province, the young prince was warmly welcomed by the army and named general of cavalry, to the relief of the modest M. Forestier who had occupied that position.

This first attack on Nantes was not successful, and is sadly memorable on account of the death of Cathelineau. After eighteen hours' fighting, the Royalists had the grief of seeing this brave man fall mortally wounded.[1] This and the loss of other officers utterly discouraged the men, and the army hastily retreated across the Loire. Cathelineau was removed to Saint Florent, where he died a few days later, to the irreparable loss of the cause for which he gave his life. He was succeeded in the supreme command by M. d'Elbée.

M. de Lescure was still ill at Boulaye, but about this time, hearing that the Republican General Biron, with an ever-increasing army, was at Niort, and that Parthenay was threatened, he would remain inactive no longer. "He sent at once to Saumur to beg MM. de Baugé, de Beauvolliers and de Beaurepaire to go to Amaillou, and in spite of his wounds he set off to watch the defence of this place. He started ill and with his arm in a sling, and I accompanied him, being unwilling to let him go alone in this state. We stopped one night at Clisson and arrived at Amaillou on the following day... the presence of M. de Les-

[1] Nantes allait se rendre quand une balle attaquait le brave Cathelineau. Consternés en le voyant tomber de cheval, les Vendéens le relevèrent et l'emporta derrière leurs rangs. Après ce coup ils perdirent courage; pour arrêter la deroute la plus disastreuse on fut obligé d'ordonner la Retraite."—*Mémoires* de Mme. de Bonchamps, p. 58.



THE ATTACK ON NANTES BY THE VENDEANS, 29TH JUNE, 1793.

From an Engraving by Bertault of a Drawing by Swebach Desfontaines.

Facing p. 86.

cure brought a great number of peasants to Amaillou, and he thought an advance should be made on Parthenay....'' This expedition also failed and M. de Lescure, whose crippled state made moving difficult, only escaped with his life. He had not allowed his wife to follow him to Parthenay.

"I had returned from Amaillou to Clisson," she tells us, "and he sent me a messenger to say what had occurred. This man arrived at a gallop—fright had made him lose his head, and he thought he was pursued. He knocked at my door and woke me, crying out: *Madame, de le part de M. de Lescure, sauvez-vous, nous avons été battus à Parthenay—sauvez-vous.* I, too, was seized with fear and hardly had sufficient presence of mind to enquire after my husband's safety. I dressed hurriedly, forgetting to fasten my dress, and had everyone in the house roused. I ran into the courtyard where I found a lot of reapers assembled, and I told them to go and fight, it was no time to work.... Presently news was brought that calmed me: I learnt that M. de Lescure had retreated safely. However, I got on a horse and started for Chatillon, where I arrived at five o'clock in the evening, and was surprised to be received with shouts of 'Here she is, here she is!' It had been rumoured that M. de Lescure and I had been taken at Parthenay and everyone was in despair." Mme. de Lescure then returned to Boulaye and met her mother—who had also heard the rumour—starting to join her "to die with me on the scaffold.... We were very happy to meet, and she could not believe her eyes."

The simplicity of the narrative and Mme. de Lescure's naive confessions of terror in these moments of danger, add a life-like interest to her reminiscences which is wanting in many more formal autobiographies.

MM. de Lescure and de la Rochejaquelein now retired on Chatillon in order to assemble the *Grande Armée*, while on his side the Republican general Westermann was advancing with about ten thousand men. Mme. de Lescure describes the attack made on Clisson under circumstances at which it is impossible not to smile, owing to the mistake made by the general and his troops. "Westermann then marched on Clisson. He knew it was M. de Lescure's house and imagined that he would find a large garrison and meet with obstinate resistance; so he advanced with all his men, and not without many precautions, to attack this castle belonging to the chief of the *Brigands*. They arrived about nine in the evening. Some peasants who were concealed in the woods near the garden fired their guns, which greatly alarmed the Republicans, but they seized a few women and learnt from them that Clisson was empty and that the people about had no means of defending themselves. Westermann then entered the château and from there wrote a triumphant letter to the Convention, sending at the same time M. de Lescure's will and his portrait. This letter was published in the newspapers. He could not give up what he had imagined beforehand, and announced that after having traversed a multitude of ravines, moats and covered passages he had reached the lair of the

monster and was going to set fire to it." In fact the interior of the château was entirely destroyed on this occasion, together with all the furniture and enormous provisions of corn and hay.

Mme. de Lescure gallantly makes no laments about the destruction of her home—which, she says, they had long expected, but the position of the Royalists was becoming very serious.

Westermann now advanced upon Bressuire and Chatillon, and meanwhile the *Grande Armée* had melted away after the attack on Nantes. The peasants, alarmed by the new danger to their homes caused by the burning of villages by the *Blues*, wished to place their wives and children in safety before rejoining, so that the Vendean generals were in the greatest embarrassment. Even officers were wanting. "M. de Lescure commissioned me," says his wife, "to go to the parishes of Treize-Vents and de Mallièvre near la Boulaye to take the orders for the reassembling of the men. I set off at a gallop and arrived at Treize-Vents, where I had the tocsin rung.... Then I gave the order to the Parish Council and harangued the peasants as well as I could. I went on to Mallièvre and did the same there. I sent an express to the neighbouring villages, and then returned to Boulaye to my mother." Westermann, however, gave no time for a rally and achieved a small victory shortly at Moulin aux Chèvres.

"During this fight," continues Mme. de Lescure, "all the women, as was usual, assembled to pray and await the result. We could hear the

cannon firing, and by listening attentively could judge by its distance of the position of the army. Soon I heard its thunders approaching nearer and nearer. Fear took possession of me and I ran without waiting to hear more. I forded the Sèvre at Mallièvre and took refuge in a cottage, where I dressed myself as a peasant, choosing the worst rags I could find. Finally I rejoined my mother and the inhabitants of Boulaye who had followed more slowly and met me at Mallièvre and we took the road to Les Herbiers. On the way thither M. de Concise met us and begged us to stop at the Château de Concise, where his sister-in-law lived. There we found M. de Talmond and my father, who had arrived from Nantes. Mme. de Concise was not accustomed to the Vendean country, for we found her putting on rouge and inclined to have an attack of nerves, but she received us cordially. Next day we went to Les Herbiers, and there I was persuaded to change my curious costume.

"My mother was very ill after all this. She had much self-control and at moments of danger showed great *sang froid*, but afterwards she paid by great sufferings for the violence she did herself; but I could not conceal my first emotions of fear, and yet, once the danger was over, I did not even feel anxious."

CHAPTER VIII.

ARRIVAL OF AN ENVOY FROM ENGLAND.

General Westermann now occupied Chatillon, where he did no harm to the town, merely setting six hundred Republican prisoners at liberty—but he sent a detachment of men to burn down the Château of Durbelière, belonging to M. de la Rochejaquelein. "It was an old house," says Mme. de Lescure, "hidden in the woods and surrounded by large moats. The *Blues* advanced on it with even greater nervousness than at Clisson, and retired precipitately after setting fire to it; so the peasants came afterwards and stopped the fire."

Meanwhile the Royalist army was re-assembling at Chollet. Westermann was prepared for this, and took precautions against an attack from that side, but they upset his plans by advancing on Chatillon by way of Mallièvre, and arrived when the general, quite unsuspicious, was having a Te Deum sung by the Constitutional Bishop of Saint Maixent. Here M. de Bouëre's notes are interesting. He says that the Royalists arrived near enough to the enemy's camp to be able to take the famous *Marie Jeanne* from its carriage and turn it against the Republicans,

and that it was the noise of this gun that warned the latter of the enemy's presence. Hardly any resistance was offered, and most of the Republicans decamped. "During the commencement of this affair," says M. de Bouëre, "General Westermann was at déjeuner. When he heard the first cannon shot, he supposed his gunners were firing one of the guns taken from M. de la Rochejaquelein at Moulin-aux-Chèvres. At the second shot he made the same assertion; at the cry, 'aux armes,' he left the table, but it was too late to restore order; he had only time to escape on the horse belonging to an officer.... It was at Chatillon that M. Richard, a doctor from Brittany or Le Mans, threw himself in front of M. de Lescure to save him from a shot, and had his eye shot out."

Unfortunately this engagement is memorable for the first cruelties committed by the Royalists. The burning of the villages and of Clisson had roused the peasants, and they came to fight with a strong feeling of resentment. In spite of the great efforts made by the officers to control them, the men killed a great many of the enemy, even of those M. de Lescure had shut up in prison. Word was sent to M. de Lescure, and he came to the spot "surrounded by sixty other prisoners holding on to his clothes or to his horse. When he neared the prison the riot ceased; the soldiers respected him too well not to obey him, but M. de Marigny, covered with blood and full of fury, advanced, crying out, 'Go away while I kill these monsters; they burnt your château.' M. de Lescure ordered him to cease, saying that if he did not do so

he would defend the prisoners against him, adding, 'Marigny, you are too cruel; you will perish by the sword.'"

The massacre at Chatillon was thus stopped, but many of the Republicans who fled into the country were killed by the peasants. "We awaited the result of the battle at Les Herbiers with great anxiety," says Mme. de Lescure, "and as soon as we knew it was won we returned to Boulaye; M. de Lescure came there also to nurse his wound, which still caused him much suffering."

The next engagement was fought at Martigny, under great difficulties owing to the intense heat of the weather, and the Republicans had the best of it, but —also owing to the heat—they did not pursue, and the Vendeans lost few men. "The heat and thirst, however, caused the death of about fifty peasants who imprudently drank some stagnant water. M. de Lescure, who was exhausted by fatigue and who had tired his voice by calling out constantly to encourage his soldiers, finding no wine or spirits, also drank this water; it made him ill, and he fainted for two hours."

The next fight took place at Vihiers, and here the Royalists were successful, and the enemy fled, leaving their cannon and ammunition. Santerre, who commanded them, was one of the first to escape, fortunately for himself. It was known that he was there, and the chiefs greatly desired to take the man who had presided at the execution of the King; a hundred *louis* were offered to whoever should bring him alive. MM. de Lescure and de la Rochejaquelein were not present at Vihiers, as the attack was made sooner than

was expected, but the men had been told that they were in order to encourage them. On hearing the cannon, the two gentlemen arrived in haste—to find the peasants returning with guns and flags taken from the enemy. "M. de Lescure asked what had happened. 'How then, my General, you were not in the battle? Then it was M. Henri who commanded us,' and others said the same to M. de la Rochejaquelein. The officers came up to explain to the Generals the use which had been made of their names.

"The staff returned to Chatillon," continues our heroine. "I came there to dine, and was witness to a scene which shows the character of the Vendean soldier. Two millers of the parish of Treize-Vents had been put in prison for some fault. They were good soldiers, and liked by their comrades. All the peasants at Chatillon began to murmur loudly, saying that they were too hardly treated, and at last forty men of the parish placed themselves in prison, declaring that they were as guilty as the millers were. The Chevalier de Beauvolliers came to me and asked me to beg forgiveness for the two men from M. de Lescure, who did not wish to appear to give in to this fuss. I went on to the *place*, and as La Boulaye is near Treize-Vents, I told the peasants I met that I would interest myself in their comrades. I implored M. de Lescure to restore them to liberty, to which, after seeming to hesitate, he agreed. I went myself to the prison, and had the prisoners released. 'Madame, we thank you much,' the soldiers said to me, 'but all the same it was wrong of them to put the millers in prison; they had not the right to do that.'"

It was at this time that M. d'Elbée was elected General-in-Chief of the whole Vendean army, owing to the regretted death of Cathelineau, and Mme. de Lescure shows rather amusingly that the appointment did not please her. She says that it came about *tout de travers* and in consequence of a little plan of M. d'Elbée's own, M. de Bonchamps—who, she says, should have been chosen by all men of good sense—being still laid up at Jallais; but she adds her testimony to M. d'Elbée's good qualities. "He was a warm-hearted man, full of good sentiments, and, as everyone knew, he would not interfere, and would let people do as they wished—being pleased to bear the title of *Généralissime*, which was his ambition—no one thought of upsetting the arrangement... on his side M. d'Elbée, in order to gain forgiveness for his promotion, and to show affability, redoubled his bows and compliments. I remember that when I congratulated him I only repeated twice the word, 'General,' 'General,' as I curtsied, while he spoke to me with incessant bows, the way one sometimes sees at a play."

Under the new régime M. de Lescure was one of the four Generals of Division, and chose M. de la Rochejaquelein to be under him, while M. de Donnissan selected M. de Charrette. After several unimportant engagements, in which the only success achieved by the Royalists was the recovery of Chantonnay, the army returned into its own country, for La Vendée was now being attacked from all sides. M. de Bonchamps' division was to protect Anjou, M. de la Rochejaquelein was sent towards Thouars and Doué,

and M. de Lescure formed a camp at Saint Sauveur, near Bressuire.

The peasants had been forbidden to send cattle to market in towns which belonged to the enemy, but M. de Lescure heard that, in spite of this order, the market of Parthenay was well provisioned. He therefore made an expedition to the town, and all the cattle found there for sale were seized and sent to Chatillon. He ran a great risk at Parthenay, for as he was passing down one of the streets talking to a friend, a gendarme, hidden behind a door, fired on him, the bullet passing close to his ears. The proprietor of the house had favoured this attack, and according to the proclamation of the Vendean Generals, the town, like all those where any Vendean was assassinated, should have been burnt, but M. de Lescure assembled the inhabitants, and addressed them in these terms: "If I did my duty I should set fire to the place, but as the matter concerns me alone, I will forgive you. Otherwise you would think that I wished to revenge offences committed against myself, and the fact that you accompanied the troops who burnt and pillaged my Château of Clisson."

His men, however, were not so forgiving, and did some damage to property, though not to persons, at Parthenay. At Saint Sauveur M. de Lescure was in the midst of his own lands, and some of the peasants came to pay him rent, although rents had been abolished by the Convention, but he would not take it, telling them they might certainly keep the money while the war lasted.

About this time the Chevalier de Tinténiac was sent

by the English Government on a mission to La Vendée. This is not the place to discuss in full a matter which unfortunately had no serious results, but some of the particulars of M. de Tinténiac's effort are interesting in connection with the de Lescures themselves. The envoy was landed by a fishing boat, during the night, on the coast near Saint Malo. He had no passport of any kind, and knew little of the roads. In going through the suburbs of Châteauneuf, the sentry called, *Qui vive?* and he replied, *Citoyen*, and passed on. When daylight came, not knowing how to proceed, M. de Tinténiac went up to a peasant and confided in him that he was an *emigré* trying to get to La Vendée, and from that time he was taken care of and passed from parish to parish, was ferried safely across the Loire, and finally reached La Boulaye.

"M. de Tinténiac," says Mme. de Lescure, "belonged to one of the best families of Brittany; he was thirty, small, and his face was animated and *spirituelle*. He carried his despatches in two pistols." Happily, several of the chiefs were at Boulaye—MM. de Lescure, de la Rochejaquelein, the Bishop of Agra, M. Desessarts, and M. Béjarry; and after some hesitation on their part, as the envoy was a stranger to them, they and M. de Tinténiac became very friendly, and discussed the questions sent by the English Government. The despatches, which were the first sent by England to La Vendée, had been forwarded by Mr. Dundas, Governor of Jersey, and contained, says Mme. de Lescure, many expressions of praise for the courage and constancy of the insurgents, and hearty desire on the part of the English to come to their

assistance. That there was much ignorance of the position in La Vendée was evident.

Several questions were propounded, to which answers were requested, and these were as follows: "We were asked the real object of our revolt and the nature of our opinions; what had occasioned the rising; why we had not tried to establish relations with England; what were our relations with other provinces or with foreign powers; what the number of our soldiers, etc.? The whole was written in a tone of great good faith, and even of fear that we should reject the English offers; it also showed uncertainty as to our projects. It did not appear to be known whether we were defending the *Ancien Régime*, the Constitutional Assembly, or the Girondistes."

"It was necessary to reply at once, for M. de Tinténiac could only spend two days in La Vendée; his guide was waiting for him on the other side of the Loire, and he had to meet him on a certain day. My writing was then very fine and very legible. The gentlemen employed me as secretary, and I wrote the despatches which M. de Tinténiac intended to carry inside his pistols as before. I do not think one of those who signed the papers is now alive, and I alone, perhaps, can give the details of that correspondence.

"The Generals replied pretty frankly to the English Minister. They explained the political opinions of the Vendeans, and said that if they had not sought assistance, it was owing to the great difficulty of holding communication; that help was greatly needed (yet we took pains slightly to exaggerate our strength, so as not to let the English think that their aid would be

ill-bestowed). We proposed that landing should take place at Sables or at Paimbœuf, and we promised to bring fifty thousand men to any place chosen on the day fixed upon. We informed them that M. de Charrette had lost the Isle of Noirmoutier, but that he still held the small port of Saint Gilles. As for Rochefort, La Rochelle and Lorient, of which the English spoke in their letter, we made them see that they would be very difficult to attack." One point was specially urged, Mme. de Lescure tells us, in this document, namely, that if a force was sent, it should be commanded by one of the French royal princes and composed largely of French *emigrés*. All the Generals present signed the despatch, and "they wrote another letter to the princes, protesting their devotion and their blind obedience, and expressing also their great desire of seeing one of them in La Vendée."

M. de Tinténiac, who had proved to be so courageous a messenger, continued for some little time to pass between England and France. Once, we are told, he swam the Loire, holding his despatches in his mouth, and once he actually had an interview with Carrier in the heart of Nantes, and only escaped imprisonment by threatening to shoot the tyrant through the head. M. de Tinténiac afterwards died bravely at Quiberon.

The next engagement fought by the Vendeans was that of Luçon—the most disastrous which the Royalist cause had yet sustained. M. de Lescure was found fault with on this occasion for the disposition of the troops. "He was blamed," says his wife, "for having adopted a plan suitable for troops of the line, but which was almost impossible of execution for our

peasants. He had been obstinate in urging it at the Council. On his side he reproached M. d'Elbée with not supporting that which had been agreed upon." After this engagement, in which M. de Lescure and M. de Charrette fought side by side for the first time, "M. de Charrette returned to his province; he had retreated in good order, together with M. de Lescure, and they parted after giving each other signs of esteem and promising to keep up their friendship. I had sent a courier to ask for news of the battle; he could not find M. de Lescure immediately, and M. de Charrette undertook to write to me. His letter was very kind, and he professed great admiration for M. de Lescure."

This defeat was followed and effaced by a successful attack on Chantonnay, where the Republicans lost heavily. "The little Chevalier de Mondyon behaved wonderfully well that day. He was near a big officer who, less courageous than he, wanted to retire, saying he was wounded. 'I don't see that,' replied the child, 'and as your going would discourage our people, if you show any sign of flight I will shoot you.' He was quite capable of doing so, and the officer remained at his post."

We now approach a sad time in the annals of the war. "I have come to a cruel moment," says our heroine. "Soon I shall be unable to chronicle the prosperity or hopes of the Vendeans. There will always be glory and courage to record, but the successes themselves will be mixed with sorrow. The scene of the insurrection was now surrounded by two hundred and forty thousand troops. Terrible measures

F. A. DE CHARRETTE,

Commander-in-Chief of the Royalist Army of La Vendée. Put to death at Nantes, 29th March, 1796.

Facing p. 100.

had been taken. The *Blues* marched with fire and sword in their hands; and their victories were followed by massacres—neither women nor children were spared, and prisoners were killed. Finally, the Convention had decreed that thirty square leagues were to be turned into a desert, without men, houses, or even trees. This order was partially executed."

A succession of engagements began with an attack made by M. de Bonchamps' division on Roche d'Erigné, while M. de la Rochejaquelein marched on Martigny. Here a fierce engagement took place; "the fight was obstinate and bloody. Henri was in a deep lane, from whence he gave his orders, when he received a bullet in the hand, by which his thumb was broken in three places, and the bullet also hit his elbow. He was holding a pistol at the time, and did not let go, only saying to his servant, 'Look if my elbow is bleeding.' 'No, Monsieur.' 'Then it is only the thumb that is broken,' and he went on directing his men." Next day he was obliged to leave the command to Stofflet, who took his place on the attack on Doué. He, too, was seriously wounded in the thigh, and the Royalists were forced to retire. Stofflet, in spite of his injury, continued to command, and, thanks to him, the retreat was made in fair order.

M. de Lescure had returned to Saint Sauveur, and on September 14th his division advanced on Thouars, where there was a large Republican force, amounting to twenty thousand men. "At first our men succeeded in their attempt, and the enemy were dispersing when a fresh troop of Blues arrived from Airvault. M. de Lescure and his officers received them calmly,

and defied them. They did not dare advance, so the wounded were removed in safety, M. de Lescure helping to carry the litters, as he often did."

This attack on Thouars was of great use, as it dispersed the cloud of Republican troops, and so intimidated them that for a fortnight afterwards they never left the town.

CHAPTER IX.

HEROINES OF LA VENDÉE.

AFTER the battle of Thouars the body of a woman was found among the Vendean dead. This created great excitement, and it is the first fact of the kind which is noted by Mme. de Lescure. "Some said it was me," she says, "or my sister-in-law, Jeanne de Lescure. The one rumour was as false as the other. M. de Lescure had severely prohibited any woman joining his troops, threatening to chase away anyone who did so with ignominy. Some little time before the affair of Thouars, however, a soldier had asked to speak to me, saying he had a secret to confide to me. It was a girl; she wanted to have a linen vest, such as were being given out to the men, instead of her woollen one, and fearing to be discovered, she came to me imploring me not to say anything to M. de Lescure.

I found she was called Jeanne Robin of Courlay. I wrote to the priest of her parish, and he replied that she was a very respectable girl, and that he had been quite unable to dissuade her from going to fight. She had been to Communion before starting. The night before the battle she came to M. de Lescure and said, '*Mon Général*, I am a woman. Mme. de Lescure

knows, and she knows also that there is nothing against me. There will be a battle to-morrow, please let me have a pair of shoes. When you see how I can fight I am sure you won't send me away.' In effect she fought continuously under M. de Lescure's eye, and called to him: '*Mon Général*, you will not overtake me; I shall always be nearer the *Blues* than you are.' She was wounded, and that made her fight harder than before, but at last she was killed in the mêlée, in which she fought furiously."

So far the *Mémoires*, but M. Costa de Beauregard, in his preface to Mme. de Bouëre's book, gives us in his charming language a touching picture of this gallant Vendéenne, with some details evidently unknown to Mme. de Lescure. "This poor Jeanne, daughter of *Père Robin*, one of M. de Lescure's farmers, was twenty; neither her lover nor her curé could stop her '*quand ç'a sentait la poudre*' from joining the soldiers with her gun and her dog *Chanzeau*—and she fought, and as she fought she prayed like the other *Jeanne*. At last, at the attack of Thouars, a ball came and buried itself in her breast. They propped her against an oak tree; Jeanne's brother stayed by her, and her fiancé ran to find the curé, whom he knew to be at hand with the dead and dying. He came and he married Jeanne and her lover. But death was pressed for time, he had so much to do on the field of battle that he did not even leave these children time for a second kiss.... The widower and her brother buried Jeanne at the foot of the oak, and then went back to fight."

Mme. de Lescure is of opinion that not more

than ten women in all fought in the Vendean army, but this is evidently a miscalculation—most of the heroines apparently fought in Charrette's division. She supposes it was to excuse their cruelties that the Republicans talked so much of women combatants; but, on the other hand, she says, alas! that it is true that fugitives from the Republican ranks were often seized upon and killed by the women and children left behind in the villages. "These were horrible reprisals, but the burnings and massacres had enraged the people."

We have mentioned these horrors in the spirit of historic truth, but it is a relief to be able to turn to the record of the many heroic and self-sacrificing women who suffered and died for the cause of loyalty. Three names stand out especially among these. Jeanne Robin, whose story we have just given; Petronelle Adams, the so-called *Chevalier Adams*; and Renée Bordereau, surnamed *Langevin*.

Petronelle "covered herself with glory" at Chantonnay, Saint Florent, and in many other engagements. She was arrested after the dispersion of Royrand's force, and was taken before the Military Commissioners at Fontenay, where she was condemned to be shot. She fell crying out *Vive le Roi*. The most celebrated of the three, however, was Renée Bordereau. She took arms to avenge the death of her father, and joined Stofflet's regiment of *chasseurs*. Her dress was the same as theirs, and she wore the large round hat, with its white cockade, over her long flowing hair. At her first battle she killed seventeen Blues, and was present at so many other engagements

that the Vendeans came to look upon her as invulnerable. She crossed the Loire with them as far as Granville, and after the disaster at Savenay returned alone, crossing the river at night on a rough raft of planks. She then went to the Bocage and joined Stofflet's and Henri de la Rochejaquelein's force, and we shall find her at the hero's death scene.

Renée helped to save Mme. de Bouëre at a moment of imminent danger. The de Bouëres were in hiding at a farm, which was surrounded by some of the enemy's gendarmes, when they heard one of the latter cry, "*Sauvons nous, nous sommes perdus.*" "At the same time," says Mme. de Bouëre, "cries were heard of *Vive le Roi*, and six armed Vendeans cleared the hedge which was in front of the house. The gendarmes did not wait for them, but fled, pistol in hand, by the opposite door, and without mounting their horses set off to run across the fields; the others followed, pursued by the Vendeans. I was so resigned to death that this sudden change of surroundings paralysed me. The hurried flight of the gendarmes, their pistol shots, the gun shots of our deliverers stunned me, and I could not realise how matters really were. M. de Bouëre roused me by these words: 'Quick, save yourself, that way,' and we went out by the door which had been abandoned by the sentinels.... Among our brave deliverers was a woman called Renée Bordereau—surnamed *Langevin*—who fought with a courage and audacity that never failed throughout the war. She had heard of our danger, and came at the head of a detachment to save us."[1]

[1] Mme. de Bouëre, pp. 109-112.

After the war, Renée had the honour of being considered dangerous by Napoleon, and he had her arrested and imprisoned at Mont Saint Michel. She was set free at the Restoration, and actually fought again in 1815, during the *Cent jours*. Later, through the influence of Mme. de Bouëre, she obtained a modest pension of three hundred francs, and died in 1822 in her native village. In a letter of July 22nd of that year, Mme. de la Rochejaquelein announced her death in moving terms to Mme. de Bouëre. "This letter, which bears signs of the *Marquise's* tears, is a flower placed on the grave of the obscure and valiant peasant who had testified her fidelity to her God and to her King by twenty years of combats, sufferings, and imprisonment."[1]

The daughter of a baker at Mortagne-sur-Sèvre joined the army when only sixteen to fight with her brother. She did not disguise herself, but "with a long red skirt and her head covered by a white handkerchief, she crossed swords with the Republican hussars and dragoons. She returned home after the war, married, and became a good mother of a family, as though she had never left her spinning wheel."

Louise Regrenelle, "tall, strong, and gifted with a body of iron," entered the Vendean cavalry at the beginning of the war, and only laid down her arms when peace was proclaimed. In 1820 Louis XVIII. sent her a *fusil d'honneur* in recognition of her valour.

Mme. de Lescure tells us of other amazons whom she knew. "I saw two sisters of fourteen or fifteen," she says, "who were very courageous. In M. de

[1] *Etudes d'Ames*, Em. Terrade, pp. 228, 229.

Bonchamps' army there was a girl who always followed her father to battle. He was killed at Pont de Cé, and it is affirmed that on that day she killed nineteen Republicans. She is still living. One day at Chollet I saw a tall and beautiful girl who carried pistols at her belt and a sword; she was accompanied by two other women armed with pikes. She was bringing a captured spy to my father. On being questioned, she said she came from the parish of Tout-le-Monde, and that there the women kept guard when the men were with the army. She was much praised, and her little martial air made her still prettier."

But it was not only the peasant women who fought for the cause. Many fine old names are to be found on the list of these valiant *femmes guerrières*, such as: Mme. de la Rochefoucauld, who, "young and beautiful, with sabre in hand rallied the peasants and sent them against the *Blues*," and when taken prisoner smiled in the face of death. Mme. du Fief de Saint-Colombin, also young and charming, who later on received the cross of Saint Louis for bravery. The Comtesse de Brue, "who was unequalled as a horsewoman, and who rode here and there on the flank of the army to encourage the combatants and to stop the fugitives." Mesdemoiselles de Couëttus and de la Rochette were equally courageous. They were attacked in the forest of Grala by dragoons, and wounded as they were defending themselves. Mlle. de Couëttus received a sabre cut on the head, and fell from her horse bathed in blood, but still calling out *Vive le Roi*. She was placed in a cart to be taken to Sables d'Olonne. A

Republican officer, touched by her courage and misfortune, threw her a handkerchief and galloped off. When she tried to staunch her wounds she found he had tied some gold pieces in the handkerchief. Mlle. de Rochette, who survived to become Mme. de Chantereau, was only taken prisoner after receiving seven sabre cuts.

Other Vendéennes, less fortunate than their sisters who fell in battle, were put to death by their captors. They were condemned to be shot, or drowned, burnt, or guillotined, for all these forms of death were employed against them, but in dying they repeated with firm and almost joyous voices, "*Vive Dieu! Vive le Roi! nous allons en Paradis.*" One young girl of sixteen, Marie Papin, was surprised by a patrol of Blues as she was taking bread to two wounded Vendean soldiers who were concealed in a field. They stopped her and tried to make her tell them where she was going, but she would neither betray her friends nor tell an untruth, so she kept silence. When they threatened to kill her, her only reply was to make the sign of the cross and fall on her knees in prayer. A blow from a bayonet killed her, and as she expired she murmured a last prayer.

Even children took their share of the dangers and the glory. Mme. de Lescure mentions that several of them followed the army, and that a little girl of thirteen acted as drummer in M. d'Elbée's corps, and "beat the charge with wonderful energy." She was killed at the battle of Luçon. A small boy of seven also went courageously into battle. There is a pretty

story told of a child in connection with Bernard de Marigny, the General "of high stature and large heart," who, in spite of his severity to the enemy, had a very tender and compassionate soul. On one occasion he found a tiny girl clinging to her dying mother, Mme. de Rechignevoisin, and he adopted her on the field of battle. At night he wrapped her in his military cloak, and laid her to rest on a gun carriage, sleeping near to guard her, and night and morning he made her say her little prayers. In years to come, after passing safely through all the dangers of the war, she would say, "I learnt to pray to the sound of cannon."

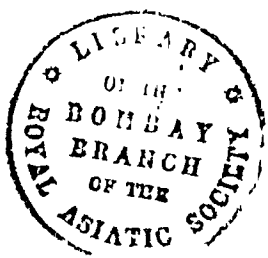
Chanzeaux, a small village in La Vendée, was the scene of one of the most heroic defences in the war, and as the women took a chief part in the incident, it may find its place here. This village had already been burnt by the enemy, but the tower of the church had remained untouched, and here, when the news came in April, 1795, that the Blues were again approaching, the sacristan, Maurice Ragueneau, his wife and young sister, the Abbé Blainville, seventeen men, ten women and two children took refuge, and from here they made a heroic resistance to the enemy. After five hours of obstinate fighting the defenders were still uninjured, but the Republicans now managed to set fire to the building, and the flames soon reached the imprisoned Vendeans. The first victim was the Abbé Blainville, and presently Ragueneau received his death-wound from a bullet. "He raised his eyes to heaven, made the sign of the cross and fell into the flames. Jeanne Ragueneau threw herself down after him, and to those

who tried to restrain her, saying, 'Jeanne, you cannot thus dispose of the life God has given you,' she replied, 'Let me die; no, it is not offending Him to escape these monsters by death. My God have pity on me.'"

The fight was ended. Maurice's widow, five other women, two children and thirteen men survived, most of them covered with wounds; protected by the thickness of the walls, they prayed, their heads in their hands, waiting for the flames to devour them; already the women's dresses had caught fire. At last the Republicans, touched with pity, cried out to them to yield, "*Rendez-vous, les femmes seront respectés—le temps presse: des échelles aux fenêtres du clocher.*" After some hesitation, the besieged all agreed to surrender except one—a former chasseur of Stofflet's—who was speedily shot by the enemy. The first woman who tried to descend, fell and was killed, but the rest reached the ground without serious accident. It is regrettable to add that, in spite of the promises, two young men were at once shot, but the soldiers seem to have felt deep pity for the poor women; some of them took off their cloaks and threw them over them, and the remaining prisoners were taken to Chemillé, where they remained in safety until set free by the truce signed by Stofflet in the following month at Saint Florent. The multitude of women and young girls who, although they did not carry arms, suffered the terrible deaths we have alluded to—by water, fire, shot, or the guillotine—is incredible. Mme. de Bouëre gives whole lists of them, and it is difficult to say which is the greater, the heroism of the

victims or the inhuman cruelty of those who sent them to their death. Were it not for the records preserved, we should be tempted to echo in their regard the words of a French writer who, in speaking of Carrier's crimes, says that their recital "tempts one to look upon them as a tale from *The Thousand and One Nights* invented in the lower regions."

Mme. de Lescure concludes her remarks about the women who took part in the war by a testimony to the Vendean priests, who had been accused of joining in the fighting. "It has also been falsely stated," she says, "that the priests fought. They confessed the dying in the midst of the firing, so that their dead bodies may have been found on the battlefield; but none of them ever thought of anything but of exhorting and rallying our men and inspiring them with courage and resignation in their sufferings. If the peasants had seen them acting contrary to their vocation, they would have lost all reverence for them. Such a thing was so far from Vendean ideas that the generals sent M. de Soulier to prison for concealing the fact that he was a sub-deacon and for fighting in spite of it."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CHAPTER X.

LAST VICTORIES OF THE VENDEANS.

At this moment, when MM. de Bonchamps, de la Rochejaquelein and Stofflet, as well as M. de Lescure, were invalided by their wounds, and the other generals were engaged elsewhere, a large force of Republicans under Santerre's command were advancing from Saumur. Happily, as Mme. de Lescure says, M. de Piron was able—with the assistance of M. de la Rochejaquelein, who sent the peasants from the neighbouring villages—to assemble some ten or twelve thousand men. They encountered Santerre and his forty thousand men between Coron and Vézins, where the enemy's forces occupied four leagues of the high road. M. de Piron, perceiving the weakness of their position, at once attacked them in the centre, and after an hour and a half of fighting the line was broken and confusion reigned among the Blues. Their artillery was just defiling from a narrow street in the suburb of Coron, and M. de Piron lost no time in blocking the village at both ends, so as to intercept the guns, thus rendering the defeat complete.

"This victory does infinite honour to M. de Piron, who showed such ability and courage, and who could not be seconded by any officer of repute. The

soldiers in the midst of the battle shouted, *Vive Piron! Vive Piron!*" The Vendeans, encouraged by this success, now took the offensive and attacked the Blues, who retired before them beyond the river Lazun, which they crossed by the Pont Barré. A little higher up there was another bridge, which had been half destroyed. "A column of peasants without any officers approached this bridge. Jean Bernier, a miller's assistant from the parish of Saint Lambert, left the ranks and, throwing himself into the river, swam across; others followed his example, the bridge was repaired, and the troops passed over. Bernier then took a flag, and crying, 'Friends, follow me,' soon reached the Republican troops, which were crowded together in a small space. Meanwhile MM. de Sorinière, du Houx, and Cadi forced the Pont Barré, and in a moment the enemy was completely routed."

M. de Charrette was less fortunate; he had been unable to stop the advance of the *Mayençais* from Nantes, and the latter, together with General Beysser's troops and some others from Sables, attacked the Vendeans in Lower Poitou from three different points. The small Royalist forces at Savin, Coëtus and Chouppes were obliged to fall back on Lêgé, where M. de Charrette was encamped. In consequence of the massacres which had now begun, the women, old people, and children followed the march of the army and delayed its progress. "The disorder was very great, and the terror of the people increased. M. de Charrette abandoned Lêgé to retire on Montaïgu, where he was attacked and beaten; he took refuge at Clisson,

but could not hold it either, and at last reached Tiffauges, after losing all the ground which he had gained. He brought with him an immense crowd of people who were flying from the sword and fire of the Republicans.

"M. de Charrette sent to beg assistance from the *Grande Armée*, and it was felt that the fate of La Vendée was now in the balance.... The generals determined to win or to perish in the coming engagement. M. de Bonchamps arrived with his arm in a sling, and M. de la Rochejaquelein, who was kept away by his wound, was the only chief not present." The horrors committed by the enemy had roused general indignation: it was decided that no quarter should be given, and that the Mayençais were to be considered as violating an agreement in which La Vendée had been explicitly included.[1] "The Curé de Saint Laud said mass at midnight; he preached a very beautiful sermon, and solemnly blessed a great white flag embroidered by me for M. de Lescure's troops," says Mme. de Lescure.

Mme. Bouëre's reminiscences here give some interesting details of the disposition of the Vendean forces, which she quotes from M. de Beauvais's *Mémoires*. The *Grande Armée* and M. de Bonchamps' men, together with Charrette's division and

[1] This famous regiment had garrisoned Mayence till the capitulation of that town, and was pledged not to fight against the allies for two years. "L'oubli où les puissances Coalisées nous avaient laissés ne songeant pas même à stipuler dans les capitulations que les garnisons ne pourraient marcher contre nous, fut une circonstance cruelle pour les Vendéens et leur montra qu'en effet la Coalition ne servait pas la même cause."—*Mémoires*, pp. 183-4.

some others, joined forces on the high road between Tiffauges and Chollet and only a mile from Torfou. "About seven o'clock on the morning of September 19th," continues M. de Beauvais, "we were thus assembled awaiting General de Bonchamps, who had not yet recovered from his recent wound and had not slept in camp. He arrived, and almost before he was out of his carriage he asked if an exact *reconnaissance* had been made of the roads to Torfou, and if they were guarded. He was told yes. 'But there is another road,' he replied, and he showed it on his map, adding that the enemy would come that way." The General was right. As a detachment headed by MM. de Bonchamps, d'Elbée, de Bouëre, and de Beauvais advanced along this road, they were greeted with bullets. M. de Beauvais went back to call the men to come on, and they "advanced in the best possible spirit," but being surprised by the unexpected appearance of the enemy at this point, the left wing became unsteady and some men took to flight, the rest of the force holding their ground.

"As this battle of Torfou," continues M. de Beauvais, "was very important, and the Vendean forces here assembled formed the last barrier against the enemy in this part of the country, all the women of the neighbourhood had followed the army from afar, and at the first shots had betaken themselves to prayer. Their grief was great when they saw some of the men in flight, but seeing that the army itself remained steady, they rushed to meet the fugitives, and by dint of stinging reproaches, and by the use, even, of stones and sticks, they forced them back into

the heart of the fight, saying, 'We are worth more than you; we are not afraid. *Oculis vidi.*'"[1] Soon afterwards the enemy was beaten back on all sides, and the Vendean force was completely victorious.[2]

Mme. de Lescure adds more details to the above account of the battle. She says it was M. de Charrette's men who were discouraged at first, but that the peasants of Echaubroignes stood firm; they were the best soldiers in the army, and were christened *the Grenadiers of La Vendée*. M. de Lescure and his officers joined this group, and fought for two hours till M. de Charrette and the others brought back their men and fell on the enemy. A column was erected at Torfou in later years to commemorate this the last great victory of the Royalist cause.

Other lesser successes, however, succeeded this one, at Montaigu and at Saint Fulgent; after the latter engagement M. de Lescure and the little Chevalier de Mondyon, who had pursued the enemy too far, were in great danger; the former was severely wounded in the hand, and the latter's clothes were riddled by bullets.

The enemy had established a centre at Clisson, and in order to cut off the return thither of the Mayençais, MM. de Bonchamps and d'Elbée advanced to attack them, relying on the assistance of MM. de Charrette

[1] See *Souvenirs de la Comtesse de Bouëre*, pp. 71-2.

[2] General Canclaux, who could not understand the defeat of his *Mayençais* by peasants, reproached them, but one of his men replied simply, "It is not surprising, General; these peasants fight as well as we do and shoot better," and the Vendeans, who had dreaded the *Mayençais* up till then, said of them that "their army was made of pottery which could not stand the fire."

and de Lescure. The latter had sent a messenger to inform the generals that they were, instead, attacking Saint Fulgent, but the man arrived too late; and M. de Bonchamps' victory was incomplete. This unfortunate incident caused much dissension in the army, and M. de Lescure was blamed for going to the relief of his people near Saint Fulgent instead of joining M. de Bonchamps, and to the fact that the Mayençais escaped utter destruction on this occasion, M. de Beauvais attributes many of the disasters that followed.

A very terrible incident occurred at Clisson about this time, as we learn from Mme. de Bouëre. Mme. de la Rochejaquelein does not allude to it, and one would fain hope she never heard of the tragedy enacted in her own home.

"It was after the battle of Torfou that the well at the Château de Clisson was converted into a death-trap by the Blues belonging to the army of Mayence. They threw into it about *four hundred Vendeans*, chiefly old men, women and children. They had been discovered hidden in a building to the right of the well, called the *Archives*. The smoke from a chimney where a peasant woman had lit a fire to warm her sick child, betrayed these poor people's presence. They were chased with sabres and bayonets, and precipitated into the well, in spite of the prayers of those who still lived. The well was very large. A child of seven fell against the side of the well, and caught at some iron bars. The soldiers wanted to throw him in again; they cut off one hand and wounded his shoulders with their sabres, but he kept his hold, and at length one

of the men, seeing his sad condition, pulled him out, saying, 'Save yourself if you can.' He did so and survived for years. One young girl escaped by crawling into a small space in the *Archives*, and she witnessed the whole awful scene."

In connection with these horrors Mme. de Bouëre gives the account of an interview she had many years later with one of the survivors of the Republican army. She thus describes his words about Clisson, which, terrible as they are, are not the worst part of his experiences, as related to her by this wretched man. It was in passing through La Flèche in 1829 that she met him accidentally, and, ascertaining that he had been in the armies of Generals Kleber, Canclaux, etc., she enquired whether he had been at Clisson. "He had been at Clisson . . . being questioned about the incident of the well, he affirmed it to me, adding that everyone found in the buildings had been sabred and thrown into the well. 'For my part, I sabred at least two hundred,' he said. 'I was encouraged by Carrier, who assisted at this execution and urged the soldiers to spare no one.' This terrible man, whose horrible expressions I am unable to recall, added that after precipitating the *brigands* into the well, he and his comrades had thrown down faggots and planks of wood, so that those who were not yet quite dead could not escape. Smothered cries and groans could be heard, he said. According to his testimony, these poor victims numbered over three hundred. The wretch added that this episode had been renewed at Montaigu, where five hundred persons had been thrown into a well."[1]

[1] See Mme. de Bouëre, pp. 307-8.

To return to the scene of war. The Vendeans rejoiced over the victories they had achieved, and Te Deums were sung in every parish. Mme. de Lescure was present at Chatillon for the service of thanksgiving there, which she describes as beautiful. "M. de Lescure," she says, "who had been showing such great courage and had merited the praises of the whole army, and who was called by the whole country its saviour, was on his knees behind a pillar, hiding from the looks and homage of the people, and thanking God with sincerity and humility.... That evening while I was out walking I heard that our prisoners had revolted. There were eighteen hundred in an old abbey, which was badly defended. I feared they would go to headquarters and surprise the officers, so I hurried to warn them. The gentlemen seized their swords and went to the spot, but it was a false alarm; we often had alarms of this kind; sometimes there were more prisoners than soldiers in a village."

About this time a misunderstanding, which it is really difficult to understand, arose between M. de Charrette and the other generals, and he withdrew hurriedly to Lêgé. This move upset all the Vendean plans, as none of the rest of the chiefs had sufficient men to act on the offensive. "I was very anxious just then," writes Mme. de Lescure. "My mother was ill with malignant fever, and while I was nursing her at la Boulaye I heard that M. de Lescure had arrived at Chatillon. He sent a letter by a courier to my father, but he was with M. de Bonchamps' army. The courier had orders to follow him wherever he was. I could not resist my anxiety, and I opened the letter.

M. de Lescure asked for help and for some gunpowder, he was expecting to be attacked by Westermann. I resealed the despatch, and sent on the messenger; then I hurried off to see M. de Lescure for a moment, and to tell him all I feared."

The Republican armies were advancing into the *Bocage* and drawing an ever-decreasing circle round the Royalists. The divisions of Chantonnay, la Châtaigneraye and Bressuire had effected a junction; Cérizais was occupied and M. de Lescure's Château of Puguyon had been burnt. "Chatillon and la Boulaye were no longer secure," says Mme. de la Rochejaquelein, "and we left for Chollet. My mother was barely convalescent, her legs being still swollen; she was placed on a horse though she had not ridden for twenty years. With us were my aunt the Abbess, and my little girl whom we had been obliged to wean. We set off at night in the midst of rain and fog."

M. de Donnissan was at Chollet, occupied in assembling as many men as possible to send them to the different points menaced by the enemy. M. de Lescure was at Chatillon with only three or four thousand men, while at Bressuire the *Blue* forces numbered over twenty thousand and threatened an attack. M. de la Rochejaquelein, in spite of his wounds, hurried to M. de Lescure's assistance, and both applied to M. de Donnissan for reinforcements. No help could be expected for the moment from several of the neighbouring villages, as the peasants were busy moving their families and cattle farther inland to escape the burnings. The Prince de

Talmond was also at Chollet, and Mme. de Lescure complains that he took too much upon himself, and thought it more pressing to send help to M. d'Elbée than to M. de Lescure. In any case these discussions delayed the reinforcements sent to her husband, and among others M. de Sorinière with his troop of two thousand men arrived too late.

"The Republicans attacked M. de Lescure at Moulin-aux-Chèvres, and with such a superior force that they took the place and put the Vendeans to flight. There would have been great loss of life had not MM. de Lescure and de la Rochejaquelein and several officers allowed themselves to be pursued for two hours by the hussars, crying out that they were the generals. During this time the men escaped by other roads... Chatillon was taken the same day, and the brave parishes of Aubiers, Saint Aubin, Nueil and Rothair were pillaged and burnt.

"The generals rejoined us at Chollet and M. de Boispréau, M. de Talmond's *aide-de-camp*, who tried to copy the indifferent air of his general, said to them laughingly, 'Well then, Messieurs, so you were beaten.' M. de Lescure replied, 'It is neither surprising nor shameful for six thousand men to be beaten by twenty thousand. What is strange is that the succours M. de Donnissan was sending us were delayed; the shame is for those who acted thus, and they would do well to realise it and to keep silence.' The result of this lesson was that M. de Talmond was very nice to us and did not joke us about our defeat. At Chollet I saw the peasant who had carried my flag. He came to show me that the staff was riddled

by sabre cuts; he had fought hand to hand with a *Blue*, defending himself with the flag staff."

Meanwhile MM. de Bonchamps and d'Elbée remained in the same position. They sent constant messages to ask M. de Charrette to attack the Mayençais who were behind them, but received no answer. At last, important as was their post, it became more important still to assemble the whole force in order to retake Chatillon, and it was determined to send the wounded prisoners and ammunition to Beaupréau. Here also went Mme. de Lescure, her mother, aunt, and little girl. They found Mme. d'Elbée at Beaupréau and presently everyone flocked there.

The *Grande Armée* had quickly reassembled and reached Chatillon two days after the affair at Moulin-aux-Chèvres. The men were eager to fight, and all the wounded officers who could move were with them, in addition to M. de Bonchamps and M. de la Rochejaquelein, the latter with his arm still in a sling. Chatillon was retaken and the enemy defeated with great loss. The Vendeans pursued them for some time. In their absence, the town being almost undefended, General Westermann, returning from a different direction, made a descent upon Chatillon at midnight and, entering the town, massacred the women and children and set fire to the houses. After four or five hours the Republican general retired. In the darkness and confusion the Royalists attempted no attack, and the chiefs who were outside the town waited till daylight to enter it and then discovered the horrors of the night. "The houses were on fire, the streets blocked by corpses, by wounded and by débris."

The *Mayençais*, who had joined themselves to the western divisions, now marched on Chollet, and Mme. de Lescure by the desire of her husband moved on to Vézins.

We are about to follow our heroine through the saddest part of her life, and before describing the battle of Chollet, which was to prove so fatal to M. de Lescure, it is interesting to recall Mme. de Bouëre's words about them both, although they refer to events of a rather later date. "The Marquis de Lescure," she says, "was about twenty-eight. He united great piety with great bravery, with the result that while exposing himself intrepidly, he always avoided shedding blood. He often wore, hanging from his neck, a large sabre, remarkable for its great age. His pistols were rarely charged. When he pursued the enemy he urged them to fly, to escape being killed. No one could be more humane, and he saved an infinite number of prisoners from death.... If he gave advice it was always from good motives, but he was reproached with sustaining his opinions in council with too much warmth, by which one can sometimes persuade others as much as by the solidity of one's reasons. His death was a loss which was keenly felt. Mme. de Lescure was also much loved. It was for long believed in La Vendée that her children had been lost and that she had perished miserably in Brittany." These last rumours were, as we know, happily quite unfounded, but till the end of her long life Mme. de Lescure was an object of special affection and interest to all true Vendeans.

CHAPTER XI.

M. DE LESCURE IS MORTALLY WOUNDED.

Mme. de Lescure and her party, after losing their way in the difficult cross roads we have before described, arrived at Trémentine on the evening of October 15th, and we must give her own account of the disasters that followed. "This was the day on which the Republicans were to be attacked at Chollet, as it was quite supposed that they had arrived there. On the day before (the 14th) M. de Bonchamps was to surprise them by the road to Tiffauges, and M. de Lescure by that of Mortagne—passing at the back of the army. The enemy had advanced, however, with more prudence than was expected, and M. de Lescure met them in the grounds of the Château de la Tremblaye, half way between Mortagne and Chollet; M. de Bonchamps, finding no one at Chollet, was not in time to join the other Vendean divisions.

"M. de Lescure was riding in front with young de Beauvolliers. He ascended a mound and from there perceived a Republican outpost. He called out to his men, *Mes amis, en avant*, and at the same instant a bullet hit him near the left eyebrow, coming out behind the ear, and he fell to the ground unconscious. The peasants, who had rushed forward, passed over

the body of their leader without knowing it and forced the Republicans to fall back. The little de Beauvolliers had thrown away his sabre and called out, weeping, 'He is dead.' The alarm began to penetrate the Vendean troops, and a reserve force of *Mayençais*, turning back upon them, put them to flight. While this was going on, M. de Lescure's servant, Bontemps, arrived and found his master bathed in blood but still breathing. He placed him *en croupe* behind him, two soldiers supporting him, and in this way he brought him by a miracle through the flying Vendeans to Beaupréau.

"The Royalists took refuge at Chollet, and as M. de Lescure was not to be seen there, everyone thought he was dead.

"We had spent the night at Trémentine. On the morning of the 16th I went to the church, where a crowd of women were praying, while the cannon could be heard in the direction of Chollet. Suddenly some fugitives arrived, and I saw among them M. de Perault, who came to me weeping and took my hands; he saw by my face that I knew nothing, so he said he was weeping for the loss of the battle. I asked where M. de Lescure was; he replied that he was all right and was at Beaupréau—he thought he was dead really, but he did not feel able to tell me the terrible news. He advised me to return to Beaupréau as the hussars might appear at Trémentine at any moment. No bullocks could be found to take my poor old aunt's carriage. I did not wait; I was dying of fear and I got a horse and, taking my little daughter in my arms, I set off with my mother.

"We stopped at Chemillé and here my aunt overtook us. As soon as she came we were urged to go on further, and set out, but I placed my child in the carriage. A moment later a cry arose, *Here are the Blues, let us fly*—terror seized me and I started off at a gallop, and as the road was crowded with vehicles, I went up on to a small pathway above the road and made my horse jump across it among the carts and got into a field in order to endeavour to reach the head of the column. Luckily I now recovered my senses, and rejoined my family. There had been no real danger. Some Vendean gunners, wishing to clear the streets of Chemillé to get their cannon through, had given this alarm. By evening the party reached the village of Beausse, and spent the night in a room full of soldiers on their way to join M. de Bonchamps.

"At three o'clock in the morning of the 17th we awoke to the sound of cannon which could be heard both in the direction of Saint-Florent and towards Mont-Jean. We rose to go to High Mass, which the curé was to say during the night so that the peasants might be in time to rejoin the army. We went, and the church was full. The priest, M. l'Abbé Jagault, an old man of venerable aspect, exhorted the soldiers in the most touching way and encouraged them to go out courageously, to defend their God, their King, and their wives and children from being murdered."

"The cannon could be heard at intervals during his address. This sinister noise, our position, the uncertainty in which we were as to the fate of the army and of those dear to us, the darkness around

us, all contributed to impress us sadly and terribly. The curé ended by giving absolution to the poor peasants who were going to fight."

"After Mass I went to confession. Someone had told the curé that M. de Lescure was dead and that they did not know how to tell me of my misfortune. They begged him to prepare me for it. The good old priest spoke to me in the kindest manner, striving to break the blow. He praised M. de Lescure and his piety to me—told me that I owed great thanks to Almighty God for giving me such a husband, that this imposed on me great duties, that I must not content myself with fulfilling those of an ordinary Christian; that *Mme. de Lescure* was called to greater sanctity; that no doubt God would do me the favour of trying me by great sorrows and that I should resign myself, and think only of Heaven and of the reward which would await me there.

"His voice rose and sounded as if prophetic; I looked at him in terror, not knowing what to believe, and during this time the cannon thundered and seemed to come nearer. We had to leave the church and I nearly fainted, but I was placed on a horse and we fled, hardly knowing where we were going. At a league's distance from Beausse, the Abbé Jagault met some people who told him that M. de Lescure was at Chaudron and was wounded, at which he cried out 'Oh what happiness!' and I then heard for the first time what had been believed and what had been concealed from me. We were near Chaudron, and I hurried thither and found M. de Lescure in a sad condition, with his head crushed and his face all

swollen. He could hardly speak. My arrival relieved him of terrible anxiety, for he had sent three different messengers to find out where I was. As they had not been able to hear anything of me, he imagined I had fallen into the hands of the Republicans."[1]

We must leave the de Lescures for a moment to follow the army on its return to Chollet. Already the plan of crossing the Loire and of forming a reserve post at Varades had been discussed. M. de Bonchamps was strongly in favour of this move and was convinced that the Bretons would join the Royalist cause, and in consequence, MM. de Talmond, d'Autichamp and du Houx were sent with four thousand men to cross the river at Saint Florent and occupy Varades. This incident is much regretted by Mme. de Lescure, as the force would have been invaluable in the disastrous attack on Chollet.

On her side, Mme. de Bouëre draws a painful picture of the Vendean position at this moment, and of the crowds of poor homeless peasants who, flying from the *Blues*, formed the rear-guard of the army. The hope of crushing the enemy, assembled in great force at Chollet, had brought many young men to Beaupréau, and M. de Bonchamps and the other leaders determined to utilise this large force and to take the offensive, in spite of the fact that all the Republican divisions, including the *Mayençais*, were

[1] M. de Lescure had been wounded by a deserter, who had fought previously with the Vendeans. In 1794 this man was taken prisoner by them, and shot as a traitor and a spy. Just before his death he declared that it was he who had mortally wounded M. de Lescure at Tremblaye.

assembled at Chollet. "The moment was of extreme importance," says Mme. de Bouëre, "and it must be said that under the circumstances it appeared as if the loss of this battle would be like the last judgment."

On the morning of the fatal October 17th, MM. d'Elbée, de Bonchamps, de la Rochejaquelein, de Royrand, and de Donnissan marched to Chollet at the head of forty thousand men. The Republican force numbered forty-five thousand, and at first the Vendeans held their own in the attack. "The *Blues* had begun to retire when the Mayençais came up; the Vendeans sustained the first shock well and drove them back, but a charge of cavalry did more harm—our people gave way and disorder set in. Then the chiefs performed prodigies of valour to rally them, but MM. d'Elbée and de Bonchamps were mortally wounded, and the rout was complete."[1] The wounded generals were conveyed first to Beaupréau, and here M. d'Elbée remained, but M. de Bonchamps was taken on to Saint Florent, where the remains of the Vendean forces gathered together.

The other Royalist generals had meanwhile succeeded in taking possession of Varades, and the passage of the Loire at this point was secured. As a crowd of Vendean soldiers approached Saint Florent, and as they got near the river they found boats manned by Bretons waiting for them—the boatmen calling out, "Come friends, come into our country! you shall want for nothing, for we will help you, we are all *aristocrats*." Many of the men availed them-

[1] *Mémoires*, p. 204.

selves of this means of transport, so that when, early on the 18th, the officers arrived, the passage of the Loire had already begun.[1] "We had left Chaudron during the night," says Mme. de Lescure. "M. de Lescure was carried in a bed which had been covered in as well as was possible. He suffered horribly. I travelled beside him. I was expecting my confinement, and so much sorrow and anxiety rendered my state terrible. We reached Saint Florent and there witnessed a spectacle, the grandest and saddest that can be imagined, and which will never fade from the memory of the unhappy Vendeans.

"The heights of Saint Florent form a kind of half circle, at the foot of which the shore stretches to the Loire. It is very wide at this point. Eighty thousand persons were crowded together on the plain—soldiers, women, children, old men, the wounded, were all there, flying from the fire and sword of the enemy. Behind them could be seen the smoke of the burning villages. Nothing was to be heard but tears and lamentations. In this confused crowd, each one was trying to find his relations, friends or defenders. They did not know what fate awaited them on the other shore, yet they strove to cross as if on the other side of the stream they were to find an end to all their woes. About twenty miserable boats ferried the fugitives over. Some tried to ride across —all held out their arms to those on the other side imploring to be fetched.

[1] At this point Mme. de Lescure says that her memory fails her, and that she has to rely in some particulars on what others have told her. "I was in too great grief to realise distinctly what was passing before

"In the distance, on the other side, another crowd could be seen, and in the middle was a small island also covered with people. Many of us who were there compared the disorder, the despair, the crowd in the valley by the river, which had to be crossed, to the pictures we form to ourselves of the dreaded day of the last judgment."

When M. de la Rochejaquelein and the other generals saw this exodus, and realised that the passage of the Loire was now become a necessity for the whole army, they were in despair. M. de la Rochejaquelein longed to remain on the shore and be killed by the *Blues*. "He and a great number of the officers came to M. de Lescure, whom we had taken to a house at Saint Florent, and told him with tears of rage what was passing. M. de Lescure roused himself to protest that he, too, wished to die in La Vendée." They represented to him, however, his helpless state—he could not even stand—and described to him the condition of the fugitives, the wounded and helpless, the number who had already crossed and could not be brought back, the near approach of the enemy, and the flames of the burning villages which followed their course. At last M. de Lescure was convinced. "He saw that to make a stand would be an effort beyond human strength or genius, and he agreed to be carried to the other side."

Five thousand Republican prisoners had been brought to Saint Florent. They could not be conveyed

me. I have been told more details since which had become confused in my memory."—*Mémoires*, p. 205.

further, and a council was held to deliberate on their fate. "I was present," says Mme. de Lescure. "M. de Lescure was lying on a mattress and I was attending to him. At first it was agreed that they should be shot at once. M. de Lescure said to me in a feeble voice, which could hardly be heard, 'This is horrible.'" Happily in the end no one would undertake the execution of this odious project and the men were given their liberty.

The chief person to whom they owed their escape, however, was the dying general, M. de Bonchamps. In her interesting little book, Mme. de Bonchamps thus describes her husband's last moments. After his fatal wound at Chollet, M. de Piron was able to save the general from the enemy and he was placed on a litter. "At this sight the Vendeans recovered all their courage," says Mme. de Bonchamps "to escort and protect his journey. They rallied round him, and carried the litter in turns for five long leagues—in spite of the pursuing Republicans—and brought him to Saint Florent, where five thousand prisoners had been shut up in the church. Their religious feeling had so far preserved the Vendeans from the crime of bloody reprisals; they had always treated the Republicans generously, but when they were informed that my poor husband was mortally wounded their fury equalled their despair and they swore the prisoners should die.

M. de Bonchamps was taken to the house of Mme. Duval in the lower part of the town. All the officers of his command came and knelt round the mattress on which he lay, waiting in the

deepest anxiety for the surgeon's verdict; but the wound was so serious that there was no hope. M. de Bonchamps realised this by the sad countenances of those round him and sought to calm the grief of his officers; then he begged that the last orders he could give should be obeyed and immediately commanded that the prisoners in the church should be saved from death.... Turning to M. d'Autichamp, one of his officers for whom he had a special affection, he added: 'My friend, this is certainly the last order I shall give you; give me the assurance that it shall be obeyed.' This order, given by M. de Bonchamps on his death-bed, produced the effect one would expect. The moment the soldiers heard of it they cried out on all sides, '*Grâce, grâce, Bonchamps l'ordonne*,' and the prisoners were saved.'' As M. de Bonchamps' state showed a momentary improvement, he was moved to the village of la Meillerie, where he died peacefully, assisted by two venerable priests—MM. Courgeon and Martin. ''He listened to their exhortations, not only with courage but with joy, and, lifting his eyes and hands to Heaven, said in a voice which was still firm, 'Yes, I venture to count on the Supreme Mercy. I have acted neither from a sentiment of pride nor to obtain that reputation which is worth nothing in eternity. I did not fight for human glory. I wished to destroy the bloody tyranny of crime and impiety. If I have been unable to raise again the altars and the throne, I have at least fought for them. I have served my God, my King and my country. I have known how to forgive.' All who heard M. de Bonchamps' words melted into

DE BONCHAMPS,
Commander-in-Chief of the Vendean Army.
From a Lithograph by Delpech.

Facing p. 134.

tears. His faith, his touching fervour, made his hearers share the sentiments which filled his heart. He repeated several times that they had promised him the safety of the prisoners and that he counted on it, and after receiving the consolations of religion he expired."[1]

Many years later the remains of the hero were removed to Saint Florent by his son-in-law, the Comte de Bouillée, the coffin being carried by some of the general's former soldiers. The tomb was sculptured by David of Angers, whose father had been one of the prisoners who was reprieved, and it bears the famous words: *Grâce aux prisonniers. Bonchamps l'ordonne.*[2] Mme. de Bonchamps survived her husband for many years, and after following the Vendean army through many dangers and suffering imprisonment at Nantes, was released by the efforts of some of the very men who owed their lives to M. de Bonchamps.

To return to Mme. de Lescure, the moment had come to leave La Vendée and cross to Varades. "M. de Lescure was wrapped up and carried on a straw armchair. We went down on to the shore in the midst of the crowd, accompanied by many of the officers, who, drawing their swords, made a circle

[1] Mémoires de Madame la Marquise de Bonchamps, pp. 50, 52.

[2] Saint Florent invites a halt, not only for its magnificent site but for the sake of a mausoleum. In its ancient church is buried that noble Vendean gentleman and soldier who on his death-bed issued one of the grandest orders ever breathed . . . *Grâce aux prisonniers. Bonchamps l'ordonne*—five thousand Republicans being thereby rescued from instantaneous slaughter."—BETHAM EDWARDS, *Unfrequented France*, pp. 199, 200.

round us.... M. de Lescure was placed in the boat. M. de Durivault, my little girl, my father, I and our servants got in also; we could not find my mother; she was on horseback, and had forded the river to the little island which was not far from the left bank.... When we were on board my father told the boatman to go round the island and to Varades without stopping, to save M. de Lescure the pain of being landed and re-embarked a second time, but the man absolutely refused to do this. Prayers and menaces were unavailing; my father grew angry and drew his sabre. 'Alas, Monsieur,' said the sailor, 'I am a poor priest. I undertook through charity to ferry the Vendeans across. I have rowed this boat for eight hours and am overcome with fatigue, and as I am not used to the work I should run the risk of drowning you if I tried to cross the wide arm of the river.' We were therefore obliged to go to the island and there found another boat to take us across.

"On the other side we found a multitude of Vendeans sitting on the grass; everyone was waiting to see their friends arrive safely before going further. My father began to search for my mother, and I sent to a little village—which had already been burnt—for some milk for my daughter. Varades was not far and M. de Lescure was impatient to get there, for though the day was fine, the wind was cold. Pikes were placed under the chair and two soldiers prepared to carry him, my maid and I supporting his feet by means of towels. We were advancing along the plain when a young man passed us on horseback and stopped for a

moment. It was M. d'Autichamp, and I had not seen him since Paris. He told us he was going to assemble three thousand men to attack Ancenis and to secure a second point of passage for the army. He tried to comfort me a little in the state of despair in which he saw I was. A moment later I heard the people in the town of Varades crying *aux armes*, and soon the sound of trumpets and musketry began. I had never been so near the fighting, and at what a time were they going to attack us! I stopped in fear; the gun shots roused M. de Lescure who was almost unconscious, and he enquired what was going on. I implored him to let us take him into a wood near, but he replied that the *Blues* would do him a service by finishing him off, and that the bullets would do him less harm than the cold and the wind. I did not listen to him, but had him carried into the wood and my child joined me there. Many other persons took refuge in the same place."

At the end of an hour news was brought that all was safe. A detachment of hussars had appeared, not knowing that Varades was in possession of the Vendeans, and had retired hurriedly. As the party entered the town a peasant came up to Mme. de Lescure and, clasping her hand, said, "We have left our country and are now all brothers and sisters; we will not separate. I will defend you till death and we will all perish together."

CHAPTER XII.

M. HENRI BECOMES COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

At Varades Mme. de Lescure obtained a small room for her husband, and her father, mother, and aunt, joined them in the same house, which, like all others in the town, was crowded with Vendeans. On reaching Ancenis M. d'Autichamp found it already in the hands of the Royalists. M. de Lyrot's men had forded the river and taken possession of the town, and here all the cannon, ammunition, and cattle were now stored.

At Varades the de Lescures heard the sad news of M. de Bonchamps' death.[1] No one knew what had happened to M. d'Elbée, and the army was without a head. M. de Lescure therefore sent for the officers of divisions to his bedside and begged them to elect a

[1] Mme. de Lescure says that the Republicans dug up the body of the general a few days after his death in order to decapitate it. M. d'Elbée, who had been mortally wounded at Chollet, was carried from place to place on a litter, and finally taken to the Island of Noirmoutier, but the island being retaken by the Republicans, the general was shot. He was so ill that he was taken to the place of execution in an armchair. The Republican general had great respect for M. d'Elbée, and had offered him his life if he would recognise the Republic. Mme. d'Elbée was shot also a week later. See Mémoires of Mme. de Bouëre and Mme. Sapinaud.

commander, but they replied that he was evidently their chief and would command them himself when he recovered. "Messieurs," was his answer, "I am mortally wounded, I believe, and even if I live, which I do not anticipate, I shall be for long incapacitated for service. It is essential that the army should, at once, have an active chief—one who is beloved by all and who is known by the peasants, and whom all trust. It is the only way in which we can be saved. M. de la Rochejaquelein is the only person who is known to all our men, in every division; M. de Donnissan, my father-in-law, does not belong to the country—they would not follow him so willingly. The choice which I propose would reanimate the courage of the Vendeans. I advise and I implore you to choose M. de la Rochejaquelein; as for me, if I live, you know that I shall never quarrel with Henri; I will be his *aide-de-camp*."

"Ces Messieurs," adds Mme. de Lescure, "assembled a Council of War and elected M. de la Rochejaquelein. The latter with his usual modesty declared that he would take advice from M. de Donnissan and look to him as his superior officer." Far from desiring to be commander-in-chief, he dreaded it greatly; he fully realised, and had represented, that at twenty-one he had neither enough experience nor sufficient firmness of character to deal with the position. He was admirable as a fighter, but in council he was of no use and let himself be led by others who were more ambitious. "In spite of this defect," continues Mme. de Lescure, "no one else could have been chosen: the peasants loved to follow him and he

entirely succeeded in inspiring them with his own courage and energy; he possessed in so high a degree what was needed to carry an army with him that it would have been unwise to think of anyone else.... M. de la Rochejaquelein was therefore proclaimed general-in-chief amid the acclamations of the Vendeans.

"M. de Lescure, who heard their cheers, asked me to fetch Henri; he was hiding in a corner, weeping bitterly; I brought him, and he threw himself on M. de Lescure's neck, repeating that he was not worthy of being general, that he only knew how to fight and that he would never be able to silence those who opposed him. He implored M. de Lescure to take the command as soon as he was cured. 'I do not hope for that,' replied the latter, 'but if it happen I will be your *aide-de-camp* and will teach you to conquer the timidity which prevents you from making use of your natural strength of character, and of imposing silence on ambitious and troublesome persons.'"

After this matter had been settled a Council of War met to decide on the next move: M. de Lescure had thought it would be well to march on Nantes, and it was hoped that measures might be concerted with M. de Charrette in that part of the country; but Rennes was also suggested as a point of attack, as it was known that the Bretons were ready to rise.

The latter plan was finally adopted, and M. de Beauvolliers was sent on at once with a small force to occupy Ingrande. Poor M. de Lescure, whose enthusiasm had reanimated him for the time, now

relapsed into a state of complete exhaustion. As the whole army was to march to Ingrande on the following day, it was decided to move M. de Lescure that evening. A young man living in the neighbourhood offered to conceal him and his party in his house, but he would not hear of leaving the army. "I was tempted to accept the offer for my child," says Mme. de Lescure, "but the fear that eventually she might be taken to the *Enfants Trouvés*, and the hope that she would continue to keep well, decided me to keep her with me. One could not make up one's mind to part with those dear to one. One felt the need of running the same dangers and of enduring the same fate as they."

"We started the same evening; no carriage could be found for M. de Lescure and he was placed in a cart; the shaking made him suffer so terribly that he uttered cries of agony, and when we reached Ingrande he was almost unconscious. We stopped at the first house; M. de Lescure was given a wretched bed and I slept on some hay in his room; we had hardly any supper." After much difficulty a surgeon was found to dress M. de Lescure's wounds. The next day, as there was no carriage available, the sick man was carried for a time on an improvised litter; and Mme. de Lescure walked beside him, accompanied by her maid, Agathe.

"I began to walk by the litter," she says. "M. de Lescure uttered cries of pain, which broke my heart. I was overcome with fatigue and my boots hurt my feet. At the end of half an hour I begged M. Forest to lend me his horse. He had been given the charge

of escorting M. de Lescure, and we travelled between two lines of cavalry and a considerable body of infantry followed behind. A moment later M. de Beauvolliers came up to us with a *berline* he had succeeded in finding, and some horses taken from a gun-carriage; mattresses were spread in the carriage and we placed M. de Lescure inside. M. de Durivault went with him, and Agathe sat beside him and held his head. The slightest movement made him moan, and from time to time he had paroxysms of terrible pain. M. de Lescure appeared to be in a dying condition, and for the time his character seemed to change; instead of his usual angelic gentleness and *sang froid*, he became impatient and *emporté*. Agathe was clever and patient in her attendance on him, while my short sight and keen emotion prevented me from serving him as well."

The troops with their sad charge had approached to near Candé, when there was a false alarm. "We were almost alone on the road, I was on horseback and we had got in advance of our vanguard, when I heard cries of 'Here are the hussars.' I lost my head and I was on the point of running away, but at the same moment I remembered that I was near M. de Lescure. Distrusting my own courage, and fearing that the approach of the Hussars would strike me with involuntary and irrepressible terror, I quickly got into the carriage without giving the reason, so that it should be impossible for me not to perish with my husband." Here, once more, we have Mme. de Lescure bearing witness to her own natural timidity and to the heroism which always came to her rescue when those dear to

her were concerned. It is a relief to find that the alarm was unfounded: the party reached the little village of Candé in safety.

Mme. de Lescure gives a striking picture of the march of the Royalists at this time—the vanguard protected by a few cannon—the crowd of poor peasants—old men, wounded, children, and soldiers—and finally the rearguard which had the special charge of protecting M. de Lescure. "This sad procession nearly always extended for four leagues and offered great chances to the enemy; they could have profited continually by such a bad arrangement. The hussars could easily have charged and massacred the centre of the column, and the flanks of the Vendean army were wholly unprotected.... What saved us for so long was the mistake made by the Republicans of always attacking the head or the rear of a column."

Although Brittany did not rise *en masse* as was hoped, many Bretons joined the cause; these were distinguishable by their long hair and goatskin garments. Before entering Laval the Vendeans had a skirmish with a small Republican force and on this occasion M. de la Rochejaquelein had an adventure. Ever since the battle of Martigny, where he was wounded, he had carried his right arm in a sling, but he had not allowed this fact to interfere with his activity. "While pursuing the *Blues* near Laval he found himself in a deep lane, alone with one of their soldiers; with his left hand he seized him by the collar and managed his horse so well with his legs that the man could do him no harm; our people came up and wanted to kill the soldier, but Henri forbade them to

do so, and said to him, 'Go back to the *patriots* and tell them that you found yourself alone with the general of the *brigands*, who has only one hand and no arms, and that you could not kill him.'"

The Vendeans determined to spend some days at Laval; the rest and quiet did much for M. de Lescure and he seemed to gain strength. But on the second evening a report spread that the *Mayençais* were about to attack, and Mme. de Lescure had her husband moved to a house on the opposite side of the town. The next day passed quietly and M. de Lescure had strength to return to his first lodging on horseback, but next morning definite news arrived of the advance on Laval of the whole Republican Army. In view of the important engagement at hand every effort was made to prepare for the attack, and M. de Lescure, feeling better, wanted to ride with the army, and was with difficulty persuaded not to do so; "he placed himself at the window however and by voice and gesture encouraged the men who were about to fight. The fatigue and emotion of that unhappy morning did away with the good effects of three days' rest and care, and from this moment his state went on getting worse and worse."

This engagement ended in a complete victory for the Royalists, and the enemy was driven to Château Gonthier and beyond. "M. de la Rochejaquelein displayed in this battle a talent and *sang froid* which were the admiration of the officers. Hitherto he had been rash and precipitate, rushing upon the enemy without looking to see that he was followed. This time he kept himself constantly at the head of the columns,

directing them, keeping them in line and preventing the more courageous from going on in front alone and so causing a confusion among the troops such as had often been fatal to us.... It is easy to see that Henri desired the victory to be as complete as possible.

"This was the moment," continues our heroine, "when we should have changed the direction of our march and have re-entered our own country...it would have been easy to seize Angers and to recross the Loire." This was M. de la Rochejaquelein's opinion also, but there were several reasons which made it difficult of execution. Meanwhile, the youthful general gained another success at Craon. After this, and during the councils which were held to determine upon the next move, a lamentable spirit of dissension began to show itself among the leaders. M. de la Rochejaquelein was in despair over this and came constantly to M. de Lescure for comfort and help. After various projects had been discussed it was decided that the army should advance on Fougères, from where it would be equally easy to march on Rennes or to the coast.

We now enter on the mournful account of M. de Lescure's last days on earth, and must use his wife's words. "Towards the end of our stay at Laval," she says, "I could see M. de Lescure was suffering more and more. At first he had been the better for the rest; several splinters had been removed from the wound; it had been dressed with more regularity, but he was not docile to advice, would take no remedies, and his only food was milky rice and grapes. The bone of his forehead had been injured, and this had

not been discovered at first; his long hair, matted with blood, troubled him and he wished to have it cut off. Agathe—who was very adroit in dressing his wounds, and replaced the surgeon who was absent that day, undertook to do this. I wished that only a small portion should be removed, but he insisted on it all being cut off, saying it would be a relief, and we could not persuade him to the contrary.

"I have always thought it was this operation and the fatigue he underwent on the day of the second fight which were fatal to him and destroyed the hopes we had latterly conceived. The events of the war, the disagreements among the chiefs, the critical position of the army, were also constant sources of anxiety to him. All that he thought of took strong hold on his mind and agitated him, so that he seemed even to wander a little, and this frightened me extremely. All day he would talk of the war—of what had happened, of what might yet occur. One morning the gallant Bourasseau of Echaubroignes came to see him, and told him that before the passage of the Loire that parish had already lost five hundred men, killed or wounded. All that day M. de Lescure could only talk of the people of Echaubroignes and praise their heroism. I tried in vain to calm him. In the evening fever seized him and his condition became sensibly worse. I sent for M. Désormeaux, a very good surgeon, and after this he did not leave us. I could not face the terrible sorrow which was threatening me.

"We remained at Laval for nine days. One morning—two days before we left—I was lying on the

mattress near M. de Lescure's bed; I thought he was asleep, and everyone had left the room, even M. Durivault, when my husband called me, and, speaking with his usual gentleness—which had now returned, and never again left him—said: 'Chère amie, open the curtains.' I got up and drew them aside. 'Is it a fine clear day?' he asked. 'Yes,' I replied. 'I have, as it were, a veil before my eyes,' he continued; 'I see nothing distinctly. I have always thought my wound was a mortal one, and now I have no doubt of it. Chère amie, I am about to leave you—that is my only regret, and also that I have not been able to replace my King on his throne. I leave you in the midst of civil war, with one child and expecting another—that is what distresses me; try to save yourself; disguise yourself, and try to get over to England.'

Then, seeing me try to stifle my tears, he added: 'Yes, it is your grief only which makes me regret dying; for myself, I die in peace. Assuredly I have sinned, but I have done nothing which can now give me remorse and trouble of conscience: I have always served God piously, and I have fought and will die for Him. I hope in His mercy. I have often seen death near, and I do not fear it: I confidently hope for Heaven. I only regret you—I hoped to make you so happy. If I have ever caused you pain, forgive me.' His face was calm, and he seemed to be already in heaven, only when he repeated, 'I only regret you,' his eyes filled with tears. He added: 'Console yourself by the thought that I shall be in heaven. God gives me this confident hope. It is you I weep for.' At last, feeling unable to bear so much grief, I went

into an adjoining room. M. Durivault returned, and M. de Lescure told him to fetch me back to him. He then continued to talk tenderly and piously to me, and, seeing my sorrow, he said, to cheer me, that perhaps he was mistaken, and we must have a consultation of doctors. I sent for them at once, and he said: 'Messieurs, I am not afraid of death; tell me the truth, for I have some preparations to make.' He wanted, I think, to receive the Last Sacraments and to renew the will he had made in my favour. . . . The doctors saw some hope, and he replied: 'I think you are mistaken, but in any case be sure to warn me when the time draws near.'

"The army left Laval on November 2nd without having come to a definite decision as to whether it would go to Rennes. The road by Vitré was the shortest; but Stofflet on his own initiative took the road for Fougères, taking the flags and drums with him. *En route* M. de Lescure heard sad news, which I had carefully concealed from him, and which did him great harm.' The carriage was stopped, and someone came up and read aloud to him the details of the Queen's death from a newspaper. He exclaimed: 'Oh, the monsters have killed her then. I was fighting to deliver her. If I live it will be to avenge her, *plus de grace*.' The thought of this never left him, and henceforward he spoke of the crime continually."

That evening the Lescures slept at Mayenne, and on the following evening they reached Ernée. This was to be M. de Lescure's last night. "I was overcome with fatigue," says Mme. de Lescure. "I threw myself on a mattress close to M. de Lescure, and

fell into a sound sleep. During my sleep it was seen that my husband's strength was failing, and that the agony was beginning. He asked for the same confessor he had had at Varades, but a moment later he lost the use of speech. He received absolution and extreme unction. All had been done very quietly, so as not to awake me. At one o'clock I awoke, and realised M. de Lescure's terrible condition. He was conscious, but could not speak. He looked at me and then to heaven with tears in his eyes, and squeezed my hand several times. I passed the next twelve hours in a state of misery impossible to describe."

The sad necessities of the Vendean campaign left no time for grief or even for repose for the dying, and on the next day the mournful procession set out again.

CHAPTER XIII.

DEATH OF M. DE LESCURE.

On the day following the sad night we have described the de Lescures left Ernée. "It seemed to me an impossibility to do this," says Mme. de Lescure. "I wanted them to leave us there, even on the chance of our being taken by the Blues; and the Chevalier de Beauvolliers begged to remain with us, but I was told that by exposing myself to a terrible death I should be disobeying my husband, and that his body might fall into the hands of the enemy. I had already suffered from this terror. The indignities which had been offered to M. de Bonchamps' remains had made a profound and terrible impression upon me, and I could not face the thought of such a profanation. I was therefore persuaded to start. What a frightful war! What enemies were ours! that we were obliged to hide from them a dying man, who had fought against them so nobly and had so often spared them. I was forced to see his last moments troubled, and the end hastened by the agitation of this fatal journey.

"At first I took my place on a mattress in the carriage by M. de Lescure, Agathe being on the other side. He was moaning and in pain. All our friends told me that the surgeon would be of more use than I could be,

and that I was preventing him from giving the necessary assistance to my husband; so I had to leave the carriage to allow him to enter. I then rode with my mother, the Chevalier de Beauvolliers and other friends, who surrounded me and took care of me.... After about an hour I heard a noise, and the sound of sobbing inside the carriage, and I wanted to rush to it, but I was told M. de Lescure was in the same state, and that it would disturb him to have the door opened.... I had a presentiment of my misfortune, but I dared not insist, dreading the answer I might receive. I thrust away, and would not face the sad suspicion which had occurred to me. I had no strength, and left them to do as they would with me. I rode for seven hours by the carriage." When the party reached Fougères they found it in the hands of their friends. Ramparts had been erected before the gates of the town, and carriages could only get through one by one owing to the crowd of vehicles. Even those on horseback could not easily be admitted, and Mme. de Lescure was asked to enter on foot. She consented to take M. de Beauvolliers' arm, after making him give her his word of honour that he would take her to M. de Lescure as soon as the carriage arrived. The poor lady was so exhausted that she could hardly walk. "We dragged ourselves to the first house in the town. Some good soldiers who were lodging there made me warm myself by the fire, gave me some wine, and took care of me till a carriage sent by my mother came to fetch me to the lodging she had prepared. I found a bed ready for me, but I placed myself silently by the fire.

"I asked from time to time whether M. de Lescure's carriage had come. When I heard it drive up I begged everyone to go, and asked M. de Beauvolliers to fulfil his promise. He and I alone were ignorant of what had occurred. He left the room, but returned in a moment bathed in tears, and taking my hands, told me that I must now only think of the child I was expecting. In fact, M. de Lescure had died at the moment when I had heard a noise in the carriage. The surgeon had got out, and Agathe intended doing so, but remembering that if I saw her I should become aware of my loss, she had the courage to remain in her sad position for seven hours."

Poor Mme. de Lescure could not even sorrow in peace; her room served as a passage, and the constant coming and going was an agony to her; but she says that she thinks if she had been able to give way entirely to her sorrow she could not have survived. As it was, she became very ill, and gives a terrifying description of a gigantic and fully-armed surgeon who came to bleed her, and who told her he had killed three hundred men in the war.

On the day following M. de Lescure's death, his widow received a visit from MM. de la Rochejaquelein, de Baugé, Desessarts, and de Beauvolliers, who all entered her room, and sitting down in silence wept bitterly. "At the end of a quarter of an hour Henri rose and embraced me. 'You have lost your best friend,' I said; 'after me, you were dearer to him than anyone in the world.' He replied, with a tone of sorrow which I shall never forget, 'Can my life restore him to you? If so, take it.' The others also em-

braced me. Old M. d'Auzon came, and I confided my little girl to him. Everyone wept. To all those who had known him, the loss of M. de Lescure was a great and sensible misfortune."

"Soon it became a sort of consolation to me to speak continually of M. de Lescure, to recall all that reminded me of him, to collect all the things he had cared for, to hear how much he was regretted, and how worthy he was of our admiration and sorrow; this feeling will never leave me, it will last all my life; it is this which had inspired me with the wish to write these *Mémoires*.

"I had a terrible dread that M. de Lescure's body might be insulted by the Republicans. I wanted to have it embalmed and to take it with me, but my wish was opposed, so I made the Abbé Jagault promise that he would undertake this sad duty." He celebrated a solemn requiem at Fougères. In preparing M. de Lescure's body for the grave the traces of the hair shirt worn by him in his youth were found. The remains were placed on a car, and taken to Avranches with the army. Here the Abbé Jagault fell ill, and during his illness M. de Lescure was buried—no doubt in the cemetery of the town; but Mme. de Lescure laments that she never knew for certain where her beloved husband rested, nor have later researches led to any more definite conclusion.[1]

"I will continue my sad story," says Mme. de

[1] Probably M. de Donnissan had, to spare his daughter's feelings, arranged for a secret burial, and as he was unfortunately taken prisoner soon after and guillotined at Angers, he was unable to tell her what had been done.

Lescure. "My misfortunes could not now be greater, but the sufferings of the Vendeans were destined to increase."

The Vendeans rested for four days at Fougères, and advantage was taken of this quiet time to make some fresh arrangements in the army. It was settled that the Council of War should be composed of twenty-five persons, of whom the chief were M. de Donnissan, M. de la Rochejaquelein, MM. de Talmond and Stofflet, etc., and all the officers who were admitted to the Council were to wear a distinguishing mark in the shape of a white scarf with a knot of colour to show the rank; the Commander-in-Chief, for instance, wearing a black knot. The inferior officers wore a white scarf on the arm. "All this distinction had now become necessary," Mme. de Lescure tells us. "On the left side of the river each one knew his commander, and the parishes marched separately. After the passage of the Loire things were different. Whole parishes had crossed over, men, women and children; other parishes sent no one; companies found themselves without their chiefs, commanders without their men."

Another event marked these days, the arrival of two emigrés from England with renewed offers of help to the Vendeans. Mme. de Lescure here also mentions that a few days before, while the army was still at Saint Florent an embassy of a very different kind had arrived. M. de Saint Florent, a naval officer, swam the Loire, bringing a papal brief addressed to the Vendean generals to inform them that the so-called Bishop of Agra was an impostor. "The generals

were confounded with astonishment, and embarrassed as to what to do; they resolved to keep the fact secret, for fear of scandal and the effect the news would produce in the army. It was so little spoken of that I only knew of it at Pontorson, when M. de Baugé told me everything, and said that if we took Granville, the bishop would be discreetly embarked and disposed of, as great indignation was felt that he should have deceived the whole army in a matter so holy and venerable."

Eventually, however, the so-called bishop left the Vendean forces when they returned across the Loire. After wandering for some days in the woods, he was taken prisoner by the Republicans as he was attempting to enter Angers, and shot there on January 5th, 1794.[1]

The Vendeans left Fougères with the intention of proceeding to Granville, where disaster again awaited them, by way of Pontorson and Avranches. In connection with her stay at Pontorson, Mme. de Lescure relates this curious little incident. "I remember that M. de la Rochejaquelein came to see me, and gave an example of one of those natural antipathies which no courage can surmount. A squirrel had been given to me as a curiosity; it was of an uncommon kind, striped black and grey, and had been taken from the wife of a Republican officer; it was tame, and I was holding it on my knee. As soon as Henri came in and saw the little creature he turned pale, and told me laughingly that the sight of a squirrel gave him the greatest horror. He wanted to stroke its back, and did so, in

[1] See *Mémoires*, p. 239 and n. 45.

fact; but he trembled as he did it. He acknowledged this involuntary impression simply and gracefully without thinking or calling attention to the fact that it was stranger in him than in another.

"That night I met an old peasant from Anjou who had followed the army with his five sons; one of them was wounded, the others were carrying him and also assisting their father. I gave up my room to this excellent family, and went to sleep on a mattress in the great hall."

After their defeat at Granville, the Vendeans reached Dol in a state of fatigue and hunger, as no provisions could be had at Pontorson. Mme. de Lescure had hardly settled into her room when her maid Agathe came to her mistress saying that there was a poor young man in the kitchen who was about to be shot. She believed he was not guilty, and begged her mistress to see him. "He entered and threw himself at my feet. He said he was called Montignac, that he had been forced to join a Blue battalion at Dinan, and that in order to get to the Vendeans he had got himself sent to Dol; when the Royalists arrived he had left the gendarmes he was with to go out and meet our men. The first he met was a tall young man in a blue greatcoat, wearing a black and white scarf, and he had told him he wished to serve the Vendean cause. M. de la Rochejaquelein —for I knew it was he—had charged one of his men to take care of the new-comer." Returning to Dol, he lost sight of his guide, and as he was attempting to take some cloth from a shop (as he saw some of our soldiers doing) he was taken prisoner by an officer on

the charge of pillaging. "As he was finishing his story," continues Mme. de Lescure, "Agathe returned, crying, 'Here are the soldiers coming to execute him.' He threw himself again at my feet, and I determined to save him. I went upstairs to my father's room, where the Council was being held, but when I found myself there among the generals and they asked me what I wanted, I dared not explain, and said I had come for a glass of water. I went down again, and addressing the soldiers, I said, 'Go away; the Council has placed the prisoner under the care of M. de Beauvolliers.' They retired, and I sent for M. Allard and asked him to arrange the affair with M. de la Rochejaquelein. I was very happy at being able to save this young man. On the previous day I had been much touched by the noble air of resignation of three *Mayençais* whom I saw passing my window on their way to execution."

That same evening there was a skirmish between the Royalists and a regiment of the enemy's hussars, and the latter was driven back, but by midnight it was known that the Vendeans were about to be attacked in force. "It was evident that it would be a terrible affair, and that our cause would be lost should we not be victorious. All possible precautions were taken in case of defeat. The women, the wounded, and all non-combatants left the houses and took their places under the walls. The baggage, artillery, and carts were arranged in file down the middle of the street. The cavalry was formed in two rows on each side between the women and the cannon. The cavaliers, sabre in hand, were in readiness to advance directly

the enemy should show signs of yielding. The attack began in the dark, it was a terrible moment—the cries of the soldiers, the roll of the drums, the fire from the shells, which threw a sombre light on the town, the sound of musketry and cannon, the smell and smoke of gunpowder, all contributed to the awful impression received by those to whom the issue of the combat meant life or death.... We had already spent half an hour in cruel expectation when we heard near the city gate cries of, 'Forward, cavalry. *Vive le roi.*' A hundred thousand voices from men, women, and children at once repeated this cry, *Vive le roi,* which showed that our brave defenders had saved us from massacre."

All through the night the sound of cannon could be heard growing fainter, showing that the enemy was being driven back foot by foot. Presently, however, the hopes of the besieged were changed to alarm. M. de Donnissan sent a messenger back to say that the Vendeans were routed. Mme. de Lescure was placed on a horse, and, followed by her mother and friends, started to leave the town. "An immense crowd of people filled the street, bent on flight. I soon found myself being carried away by the fugitives, among whom were soldiers, women, wounded, and I was pushed into the midst of three or four hundred mounted cavaliers, who appeared to be trying to rally the crowd. I was dressed like a peasant, having chosen this style of dress in place of mourning, and because it might help me to escape. Sorrow and the slow fever that consumed me, even more than my dress, helped to make me unrecognisable, and I knew

no one there. A cavalier lifted his sabre, saying, 'Ah, coward of a woman, you shall not pass.' 'Monsieur, I am ill and suffering, have pity on me.' 'Poor creature, I pity you,' he replied, and let me go."

A few steps further Mme. de Lescure met M. de Chesne de Dinant, a young officer of sixteen, who was urging the men to stand firm. He also did not recognise her, and kept saying, "Let the women remain, and prevent the men from running away." A little later she met Montignac, whose life she had saved, and "he seized my horse by the bridle, saying, 'You are my deliverer, I will not leave you; we will die together.'" This flight from Dol was a terrible sight, and it was only the knowledge that the enemy was not coming nearer, and the appeal made to their love for M. de la Rochejaquelein, that brought the men back to a sense of discipline and revived their hopes. "Will you abandon your brave General?" they were asked, and many voices cried: "Non; vive le Roi et M. de la Rochejaquelein."

Many women showed great courage on this occasion by stopping the fugitives and barring their passage. Mme. de Lescure saw Mme. de la Chevalerie's maid seize a gun and, making her horse gallop, cry out, "*En avant, au feu les Poitevines.*"

"The priests," she continues, "exercised a still greater influence. It is the only time I ever saw them mixed with the combatants and employing all the means afforded by religion to reanimate them.... During the moment in which we were all listening to the cannon, the curé of Sainte Marie de Ré got up on

a mound near me, and, holding up a great crucifix, began to preach to the men in a loud voice, urging them to go back and fight. 'My children,' he said, 'I will march at your head, crucifix in hand. Let those who wish to follow me kneel down and I will give absolution; if they die they will go to heaven, but the cowards who betray God and abandon their families will be killed by the Blues, and go to hell.' More than two thousand men who were surrounding him threw themselves on their knees. He gave absolution aloud, and they went off, crying, *Vive le roi, nous irons en Paradis.* When the Vendéans had retrieved the fortune of the day, and everyone returned to Dol, the curé came back at the head of his troop, crucifix in hand, singing the *Vexilla Regis*, the crowd kneeling as he passed.

CHAPTER XIV.

DISASTROUS MARCH TO SAVENAY.

THE night passed quietly, but on the following day the Republicans made another determined attack on Dol, and though the Vendeans again defeated them with great loss, it was only after fifteen hours' hard fighting. Mme. de Lescure tells us that she had not the courage to remain in the town, but made her way, together with her mother and some other women, to the further side of Dol to await the result of the battle. After it was over M. de la Rochejaquelein conducted the army to Antrain, whither our heroine and all the non-combatants followed. Next day the army marched on Fougères, which they occupied without meeting opposition.

"A *Te Deum* was sung here for the victories at Dol. It was a very pathetic ceremony, owing to the contrast it offered to our desperate situation." From Fougères the Vendeans moved on to Ernée—Laval—Sables—la Flêche, meeting no Republicans. The latter had been crushed for the moment, and the remains of their army hurried on to Angers, in order to fortify that town in expectation of an attack. "Our passage through these towns, where we had sojourned

only a few days before, afforded a spectacle of horror, and added to our despair. Everywhere our wounded, our sick, children who had been unable to follow us, our hosts, those who had shown us pity, all had been massacred by the Republicans. We continued our journey with the certainty that we too must either perish in battle or be murdered sooner or later." The following words make us wish we could have offered an asylum to our heroine in this country. "I had a great wish to try and find safety in England," she says, "but I knew no one in that country, and did not know to whom to apply." So she resolved to share the fate of the army and of her own friends.

The Vendeans halted finally under the walls of Angers, and made an attack on that town, but the enemy was not to be tempted outside their fortifications, and the Royalist soldiers, accustomed to hand-to-hand fighting, soon got discouraged, and could not be persuaded to make a general attack. Their misfortunes, hunger, and all the miseries they had undergone had sadly weakened the former energy of the men. "All orders and menaces were useless. They were even promised leave to pillage the town, but this, instead of encouraging the Vendeans, and in spite of the horror of our position and the cruelties of the Blues, greatly scandalised them. Most of them said that if there was to be question of pillage God would forsake us." The siege continued for thirty hours, after which the Vendeans were obliged to retreat.

During this time Mme. de Lescure and her party had taken refuge in an empty house in the faubourg of the town. They carried some straw into a large

room, and threw themselves down on it. "I was so exhausted that I slept for several hours, in spite of the cannon. We were so near the guns that the shot fell close to us. The attack had lasted for twenty hours, when I woke next morning, and I got on my horse without telling anyone, to go and find out what was going on. I learnt, and also saw for myself, that our soldiers would not attempt an assault, and that very little hope remained. My head felt confused, and I continued to advance.... I had not more courage than usual, for I felt terrified, but despair seemed to push me on, as if in spite of myself, into the very midst of the firing line. My father, who was in the thick of the fight, saw me from afar, and called out to me to return; then he sent a cavalier, who took hold of my bridle and led me back.... I returned to my mother. She was alone; her carriage had remained on the road, and my aunt had gone back to it with my little girl, but a moment later the postillion came to say that, seeing the enemy's hussars approaching, he had cut the traces of the horses, and that my aunt had got out quickly to come to us."

This was the last time Mme. de Lescure had any direct news of her venerable aunt; her child was brought back by the nurse, but Mme. de Durfort Civrac had utterly disappeared. "We spent a long time in looking for my poor aunt, in calling her, in searching the houses near, without finding the slightest trace of her. My mother was inconsolable, and my father sent people in all directions without success." The de Lescures clung to the hope that Mme. de Civrac had hidden herself somewhere, but later on they learnt

to their grief that she had suffered the common lot, and was killed by the enemy. "At Craon we read the papers, and learnt from them that my poor aunt and seven hundred fugitives had been taken in the neighbourhood of Angers and shot. This terrible news plunged my mother in grief. We were very tenderly attached to our unfortunate aunt; she was eighty years old, and was most gentle and pious."[1]

After the unsuccessful attack on Angers, the Vendean army occupied Baugé, and then determined to march on le Mans by way of la Flèche. Mme. de Lescure was travelling in a carriage this time, and had the young Chevalier de Beauvolliers with her, when his elder brother came to speak to her at the window. He thanked her with tears in his eyes for her kindness to the youth, and begged her to continue it, adding those words which reveal a tragedy: "As for me, I am the most unhappy of men; my wife and daughters are prisoners in Angers, and I hoped to deliver them. Now they will perish on the scaffold, and I can do nothing to save them."

To their surprise and horror, the Vendeans—whose rearguard was protected by M. de Piron and a large body of men, and who expected to find few enemies in front of them—found on arriving at la Flèche that the bridge was cut and three or four thousand Republicans were stationed on the other side of the river. "We gave ourselves up for lost," says Mme.

[1] Marie Francoise de Durfort-Civrac, abbesse de Saint Auxone (grande-tante de Mme. de Lescure) fut arrêtée à Saint Barthélemy dans les environs d'Angers et executée à Angers, le 9 Décembre, 1793. —See n. 51 of *Mémoires*.

de Lescure, "for the enemy were at that moment also attacking M. de Piron. M. de la Rochejaquelein, however, ordered the troops to stand firm and to continue firing. Henri chose three hundred picked cavaliers, who each took a soldier *en croupe*. They ascended the river bank for three-quarters of a league, found a ford, reached the gates of the town at dark, dismounted the soldiers, and Henri precipitated himself into the town at the head of his men, crying, *Vive le Roi!* The Blues, surprised and terrified, fled by the road to le Mans."

To reach le Mans was the next object of this dreary march, and here the Vendeans sustained a crushing defeat; Mme. de Lescure, foreseeing the issue of the combat, tried to place her child in safety till better days should dawn. "From the commencement of the fight we feared the result would be unfavourable. I was lodging with a Mme. Thoré, who was very rich, very well-bred, and very republican. She had seven children, whom she tenderly loved and cared for, so I resolved to confide my daughter to her, and implored her to consent and to bring her up as a poor little peasant girl, in sentiments of honour and virtue. Mme. Thoré absolutely refused, telling me honestly that if she took my child she would treat her like her own.... While I was urging Mme. Thoré to agree to my wishes, the cries of our men in retreat began to be heard, and she left me. Seeing that all was over for us, and being quite hopeless, I wanted at least to save my daughter, and I hid her secretly in Mme. Thoré's bed, feeling sure she would not be cruel enough to abandon the innocent child.

"I went out and was placed on a horse. The *place* was filled by a crowd of people flying, and in a moment I was separated from my friends.... I saw a young man passing by me on horseback who had a gentle face, and I took his hand, saying, 'Sir, have pity on a poor sick woman—I cannot get on.' The young man began to weep, and replied, 'I am a woman also; we will perish together, for I cannot get through into the street either.' So we both waited. Meanwhile M. de Lescure's faithful servant, Bontemps, seeing that no one appeared to be taking care of my child, looked for her everywhere. He found her, and carried her away in his arms. Seeing me in the midst of the crowd, he lifted her up for me to see, and called out, 'I will save my master's child.'" After a time Mme. de Lescure met a friend, and was able to rejoin others and to follow the retreating Vendeans. "I met M. de Sanglier," she says. "He had lost his wife the day before, and was ill himself; he carried his two little girls, who were also sick, on his horse. He told me that we were flying towards Laval.... As we neared that town I saw my father and M. de la Rochejaquelein approaching. They had tried in vain to rally the men. Henri came to me, saying, 'Ah, you are safe?' 'I thought you had perished,' I replied, 'as we were beaten.' He pressed my hand, saying, 'I could wish to be dead.' Tears were in his eyes... he could not console himself for not having been the last to leave le Mans and for not dying there.

"At Laval I found my mother and my child, and here we had leisure to realise our losses.... The disaster at le Mans cost the lives of more than fifteen thousand

persons. The greater number did not die in the fight. Many were crushed to death in the streets—others, ill or wounded, were massacred in the houses—some died in the moat or in the fields—a good many went along the road to Alençon, and were taken prisoner and guillotined." But among these horrors there were also cases in which Vendeans were saved by their enemies, as Mme. de Lescure gratefully acknowledges. M. d'Autichamp was one of the fortunate exceptions, and was saved by his hostess, who dressed him in the uniform of a Republican officer, who connived at the good deed. "Such was the deplorable defeat of le Mans, which was the fatal blow to the Vendean cause," says Mme. de Lescure, and there is little but sorrow to record in the future.

At Laval Mme. de Lescure lodged in the same house that she had been in before, but the unfortunate proprietor, M. de Montfranc, was gone. He was taken prisoner after the first passage of the Vendean army, and guillotined for having taken in the de Lescures' party, in spite, as Mme. de Lescure says, of the fact that, though in reality rather friendly to them, he had not shown them any attentions.

"The next day at ten o'clock, as we were leaving Laval with the remains of the army, it was said that the enemy's hussars were approaching, and everyone hurried their departure. As we started, however, we met M. de la Rochejaquelein, who told me it was a false alarm, that he had reassured the men and stopped their flight, and that he had come back to déjeuner at Laval. He begged me not to be uneasy, and assured me we should reach Craon without difficulty. *This*

was the last time I ever saw Henri." The italics are our own, for this simple sentence marks another sorrow in Mme. de Lescure's life, and prepares us for the near approach of overwhelming loss to the cause for which both cousins had suffered so generously. At Craon the fatal news of the death of her aged aunt reached Mme. de Lescure, as we have related, but these critical days left no time for grief or mourning.

The army hurried on by forced marches by Saint Marc to Ancenis, so that it might have time to recross the Loire before the enemy should come up. "The roads were dreadful, the weather cold and wet, and it seemed almost impossible to drag along the poor wounded and sick. I saw a priest carrying one of them on his back and falling from the weight. My child was in a dying condition from her teeth and fatigue. I lay down with her in the wagon which conveyed the army 'bank,' and travelled thus for some leagues." They reached Ancenis on the morning of December 16. M. de la Rochejaquelein finding no resistance, had already entered the town, and was preparing to cross the Loire. He had found a small boat on the way, on the pond of the Château de Saint Marc, and had brought it on a cart, foreseeing that no other means of crossing the river would be available, the opposite side being in the hands of the Republicans, who had troops at Saint Florent. M. de Hauterive, however, was reported to have a small body of Royalists with him, and they had been seen opposite Ancenis a few days before.

"One other little boat was discovered at Ancenis, but four great boats laden with corn could be seen on

the other side. M. de la Rochejaquelein, seeing that no one dared cross over, determined to go first." His idea was to seize the four boats, unload them, and endeavour to protect the passage of his men, who, he trusted, would be more easily persuaded not to disband once they found themselves on that other side of the Loire to which they looked as a refuge and a home.

The Commander-in-Chief, accompanied by MM. de Baugé and Stofflet, embarked on the little boat they had brought to Ancenis; while M. de Langèrie, with eighteen soldiers, filled the second. "The whole vanguard of the army," says Mme. de Lescure, "fixed their eyes on these little boats to which our future fate seemed attached. At the same time planks, barrels, wood of all kinds were being collected to form rafts, and the Curé de Saint Laud preached to the peasants to keep them quiet and orderly. M. de la Rochejaquelein reached the other side. While he was trying to empty the big boats of their loads a Republican patrol approached. A few shots were fired, and presently the general and his two companions had to retreat, and were pursued. At the same moment an armed ship stationed itself opposite Ancenis, and fired on the rafts which were being launched, and some of them were sunk. The stream was very strong and rapid, and few of our soldiers could cross, in spite of their longing to gain the left bank. Here, then, was the Vendean army deprived of its last hope; separated from its general. We could do nothing but wait for death."

Some of the enemy's artillery appeared outside Ancenis, and a few cannon shot fell on the house

occupied by Mme. de Lescure, but no real attack was attempted. The position of the Vendeans was hopeless, and the army began slowly to disband. A few of the officers contrived to get across the river, among them M. Allard. There was a rumour, spread designedly by the enemy, of an amnesty, and Mme. de Lescure's servants wished to avail themselves of it and to proceed to Nantes. "We told them that in the state things now were each one must try to save himself, but that this amnesty was not probable. They persisted in believing in it, protesting, what was perfectly true, that their feelings for us and our cause had not changed.... The greater part of these good people perished. My mother's maids, however, remained with us.

"My daughter gave me the greatest anxiety. The poor child was very ill, and there seemed no way in which we could convey her in the flight before us, which was also to all appearance a hopeless one.

"'At last I found someone who offered to hide her with some good peasants belonging to Ancenis. I went to them and gave them some money, promising them a handsome pension if it were ever in my power to give it. I dressed my child in a peasant's dress, and then I went off with death in my soul."

The remnant of the Royalist force made its way to Niort and here M. de Donnissan, M. de Desessarts, a very youthful officer of seventeen, M. Moulin, and some others were able to turn a cannon against the enemy and retard their progress. There was much disorder in the small army, and the "bank" was forced open by some of the officers who saw that the

end was approaching. A day was spent at Niort and two at Blain, but the Royalists had ever to move on in the front of the pursuing Republicans and now directed their steps to Savenay. Nothing could be more dreary than this stage of the march. Mme. de Lescure describes the start from Blain in the middle of the night, a cold rain falling, and the state of despair of the fugitives. "Cold, sorrow, hunger and fatigue disfigured us. To keep out the cold, and in order to disguise ourselves we were all covered with rags: looking at each other we had difficulty in recognising ourselves under this appearance of extreme misery. I was dressed as a peasant; on my head I wore a purple woollen hood. I was wrapped in a bed cover and a large piece of blue cloth tied to my neck by string. I wore three pairs of yellow woollen stockings and a pair of slippers kept on my feet by cords. The Chevalier de Beauvolliers wore a lawyer's cloak and a woman's bonnet over a woollen cap. Mme. d'Armaillé and her children had covered themselves with bits of yellow damask." The sad procession reached Savenay in safety, however, and the gates of the town were quickly closed against the enemy, who was close behind.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LAST FIGHT.

HARDLY had the Vendeans entered Savenay and closed the gates when the town was approached by a small Republican force, but this was only the advance-guard of the enemy and they waited until the whole army under the command of General Kleber should come up.

"It arrived in the night," says a contemporary Republican writer, "and an immediate attack was decided upon. The fight began at eleven at night and continued till day-break without any definite result. Towards eight in the morning the assailants penetrated into the town and the fighting began again, and though very fierce it only lasted an hour at most. The Royalists, beaten and driven from the town, were completely defeated and fled on all sides into the country, only seeking to save their lives, but the cavalry followed in pursuit and there was great bloodshed. This fatal day was the last for the Vendeans, and finished their destruction... it was the completion of the defeat at le Mans. Thus came to an end the campaign across the Loire and the first war of La Vendée."[1]

[1] *Hist. de la Guerre de la Vendée*, p. 206. J. Clémanceau. Paris, 1909.

KLEBER.

From an Engraving by W. Read.

Facing p. 172.

After reading this account we are not surprised to find that Mme. de Lescure was roused that evening while she was endeavouring to rest and hurriedly placed on horse-back. "I was going to get down, not knowing where I was to go," she said, "when I heard M. de Marigny's voice. I called to him and asked for news: he took my horse's bridle, and without uttering a word led me to a corner of the *place*, and then whispered: 'It is all over; we are lost, it will be impossible to resist to-morrow's attack; in twelve hours the army will be exterminated. I hope to die defending your flag; try to fly and save yourself during the night. Adieu, adieu.' He left me brusquely, without waiting for a reply, and I heard him encouraging the soldiers and trying to reanimate them."

Mme. de Lescure returned to her parents and found the Abbé Jagault trying to persuade her mother to go to some good peasants who would hide her and her daughter. On hearing what M. de Marigny had said, Mme. de Donnissan consented. "My father," continues Mme. de Lescure, "sat with his head in his hands, unable to speak; at last he urged us to do what was proposed. 'As for me,' he said, 'my duty is to remain with the army as long as it exists.' ... We dressed ourselves as Breton peasant women, and embraced my father. We were unable to speak, our tears choked us. All he said to me was, 'Never leave your unhappy mother.' Those were his last words." From this moment M. de Donnissan never again saw his wife and daughter, and for very long they could learn no news of him; until in fact the worst had be-

fallen him. This parting marks another stage in Mme. de Lescure's sorrowful experiences, and from this moment also her story becomes entirely separate from that of the Vendean army. "She was not present at the defeat of Savenay, where La Vendée, sword in hand, died in a manner worthy of itself. Three times de Marigny charged Kleber's battalions with the banner worked by Mme. de Lescure in hand, so that this flag, which had been present at the victories of La Vendée, waved for the last time at its obsequies."[1]

On that fatal day the Vendeans performed prodigies of valour, but were finally obliged to retire. Their six thousand worn-out soldiers were unable to cope with the twenty thousand fresh troops of the enemy and the powerful artillery they had brought. MM. de Piron and Lyrot were killed. The intrepid M. de Marigny, who had kept a few cannon in reserve to protect the flight of the remnant of the Vendeans, also succeeded in stopping a troop of the enemy outside Savenay. He, M. de Donnissan, and a few others, went on fighting till the last, and finally M. de Marigny and two hundred men forced their way through the enemy's lines and took refuge in the forest of Gavre. "It was the end of La Vendée. Hitherto the Republicans had been obliged to fight their enemies; henceforth they would only murder them."

Mme. de Lescure and Mme. de Donnissan left Savenay at midnight accompanied by the Abbé Jagault and Mlle. Manet, one of the maids who would not leave them. The poor ladies had only

[1] A. de Nettement.

about sixty louis left. They took the road to Guérande, trembling for fear of meeting the enemy's patrols. The first house they took refuge in seemed too near the public road for safety, and the peasants who received the fugitives offered to guide them to the Château de l'Ecuraye, where although the family itself was absent in exile the bailiff left in charge was, they said, a *brave homme*, the phrase used in Brittany for a Royalist; one of the daughters of the house showed them the way.

"We started, and at two in the morning we reached the door of the Château, where we were kept waiting a little. My mother said to me, 'I shall die here if they do not take us in.' I threw myself on my knees to ask God that we might not be refused shelter. At last the door opened. 'Look,' said our young guide, 'here are some *brigandes* who took refuge with us, but we are too near the road.' 'Ah, poor people,' cried the bailiff and his wife, 'everything we have is at your service.' They warmed us and dried our clothes, gave us food and wanted us to go to bed, but we were too afraid of being pursued and discovered. This excellent bailiff's name was Ferret; he was overcome with joy at having Vendeans in his house. He told us that the whole country was about to rise, that many of the young men had gone to Savenay to get guns and join the cause, and he could not understand why we had fled." The travellers did not dare tell their kind host the true state of the case, but after taking some rest, ready dressed, they were awoke next morning by the sound of cannon, and Ferret rushed in, saying, 'Oh my God, what is it? The guns are

firing on the road to Guérande, and people dressed in all colours are flying across the country."

Shortly afterwards some hussars were seen approaching the house, but as they reached the courtyard in front the fugitives left by the back door and were conducted by Ferret to the farm of Lagrée, which was situated in a very lonely part. Here again they were received with the greatest kindness and compassion, but as the Blue hussars were riding all over the country their new hostess thought they ought to separate to ensure greater safety. "She sent poor M. Jagault to work with the men, established my mother to knit by the fire, and conducted me to the windmill, which was situated some way from the house. She remarked to the miller, 'Renaud, here is a poor *brigande*; I entrust her to your care. If the *Blues* come, say she has come to have her corn ground.' I sat down on a sack and remained thus for four hours. At every minute I heard the sound of horses, firing of guns and cries of 'Stop the *brigands*! Kill, kill!' The whole countryside was full of fugitives, whom they massacred. The *Blues* came knocking at the door of the mill to ask for food and drink. Renaud replied that he had none. I talked a little with the good youth and he tried to reassure and comfort me. He talked much about our army, and asked who I was. I told him I was the daughter of a small shopkeeper in Châtillon, for we had confided our secret only to Ferret. In the evening Renaud stopped his mill and took me down to Lagrée, where my mother and I lay down without undressing."

Mme. de Lescure describes the interior of this Breton farmhouse, similar to so many others, dark and

low, and the big fireplace at one end in which flax was burnt which cast a greenish light on their faces; the great high beds and old coffers, and the curious arrangement of the stables next door by which the bullocks put their heads through holes in the wall into the mangers which were in the sitting-room itself, so that throughout the night, as she says, "their bellowing and the noise of their horns striking against the partition woke us often with a start and we thought people were coming to seize us. The poor Bretons are very dirty; they have neither glasses, plates nor forks. Soup made of cabbages stewed with black corn and sour milk is their only food. Happily their butter is very good, and that was our mainstay."

Next day the poor fugitives had to separate again. Mme. de Lescure was taken to the notary of the village; his wife told her she should be sent to keep the sheep with her daughter, and presently a fine girl of twenty appeared. "Marianne, here is the *brigande*," said the good woman. "Don't be afraid, mother," she replied, "I will take great care of her and die rather than desert her. If anyone comes I will knock him down with my stick." "So I went off with the good Marianne who was always very devoted to us." Soon after this first introduction to Marianne, Mme. de Lescure, her mother and the Abbé Jagault, went to live with the notary's family, where they followed the same kind of life as at Lagrée. The Abbé worked with the peasants and was called *Pierrot*. Mme. de Donnissan assumed the name of *Marion*; our heroine was called *Jeannette*. She continued to take care of the sheep.

They were now in the little parish of Prinquiaux, where all the inhabitants were loyal and hospitable, incapable of betraying their guests. Poor Mlle. Manet, the maid, who had been left behind at the first halt, ran great dangers before she found a safe home not far from her mistress. On one occasion a good peasant hid her in a hole where he kept his turnips, and although the Republican soldiers actually poked their swords into it she escaped injury. Mlle. Carria, the other maid, also found shelter in the parish of Prinquiaux. The winter of 1793-4 was passed in this way, the fugitives lived a life of perpetual alarm, of which Mme. de Lescure gives us a vivid picture, as well as of the fidelity of their poor friends. The Blues made daily visits of inspection, and carefully searched the village, where both the inhabitants and the exiles were completely at the cruel mercy of any stray soldier.

"If a peasant displeased one of them, if he refused him anything, or ran away without replying to a question, the soldier would fire at the poor man and then cut off his ears and take them to his superior officer, saying they had belonged to a *brigand*, and the latter would praise and even reward him."

One day a troop surprised the villagers in church and fired on them; happily only one man was killed; but nothing discouraged the splendid charity of the Bretons. Their constant habit of hiding their priests and the young men who were in requisition for the Republican army had made them very knowing, and they showed great cleverness and *sang froid* in hiding the Royalists. Some of them were shot for giving

hospitality to Vendeans, but this did not stop the others in their work of mercy. "Men, women and children took the most active precautions on our behalf and showed us the greatest kindness. One poor little deaf and dumb girl understood the risk and would constantly give warning by signs to those in danger—threats of death, offers of money, all were powerless against the discretion of even the youngest children. Even the dogs hated the soldiers, who always beat them, and by barking at their approach saved many lives, while, taught by their masters, they made no sound when they saw the *brigands* come near. No hovel was too humble to refuse assistance; if the travellers could not receive shelter they were offered food and a guide, and these good people were quite offended when they were offered money in return for their many good offices."

About the New Year the two ladies were alarmed by the appearance of three armed men, who said they came to see *Marion* and *Jeannette*. They proved to be friends, and suggested that Mmes. de Donnissan and de Lescure should go back across the Loire, but the risks of the journey and the uncertainty of the state of things on the other side seemed so great that they declined to make the attempt.

An old Royalist gentleman, M. Destouches, was also concealed in the neighbourhood of Prinquiaux. He fell dangerously ill and the Abbé Jagault managed to find a priest to give him the last sacraments. M. Destouches had, hidden with him, a faithful servant, to whom he left a lot of money, and he also confided to him a hundred *louis d'or* to send to his son who

was an emigré. The servant, who wanted to fight for the Vendeans, not knowing what to do with this money, the ladies offered to take charge of it to transmit it to its rightful owner. "We wrote our receipt on a bit of lead," says Mme. de Lescure, "for there is no paper to be found in Breton cottages," and later on they had the pleasure of giving the sum to M. Destouches *fils*.

The poor Abbé's health became worse, and as it was more difficult for men to hide than for women, and he dreaded to bring suspicion on his friends, under Ferret's protection he took the very courageous step of securing a place in one of the carts sent into Nantes by the Republicans, and actually reached the city and was safely concealed by friends. Mme. de Lescure tells us here again of the difficulties they had about food. "We tried to avoid the dirt of these good Bretons by eating only eggs, butter and vegetables, and we sometimes bought the latter from a gardener of the neighbourhood; he thought we were so poor that not only did he refuse our money the first time, but he offered my mother an *ecu* as alms. One day a priest wanted to give us twelve francs, we looked so wretched. I was in such a state of weakness and depression that I constantly fell asleep, but my mother felt all these things more keenly."

Poor Mme. de Lescure's sorrows were not over. While at Prinquiaux she sent a trusty person to bring her news of her little girl, and she hoped that possibly she might hear something of her father at the same time; but the sad reply was that the child had died a few days after she had left her near Ancenis, and

there was no word of M. de Donnissan. Nor could M. de Marigny, who made his way to Prinquiaux, relieve their anxiety. This wonderful man knew all the different patois of the country, and in spite of his great height and well-known appearance, managed to disguise himself in all sorts of different ways—he appeared before Mme. de Lescure as a vendor of chickens—and went about stirring up the Royalists to make a fresh effort. He had even ventured into Nantes, and informed the ladies of the terrible *noyades* in which both those who were taken prisoners and those who had given themselves up at the time of the pretended amnesty, suffered. The faithful Bontemps and another of the Lescure's men-servants, Herlobig, were among the victims, which must have been another blow to their poor mistresses.

M. de Marigny's attempt to rouse the Bretons did not succeed, and the only result was a more severe search for fugitives on the part of the Republicans. Mme. de Lescures and her mother had to leave Prinquiaux for a time and seek refuge at La Minaye, but here too the approach of the Blues forced them to spend the night in the woods, Mme. de Lescure sleeping with her head on Mme. de Donnissan's lap; and next morning they knew not where to go. In these desperate straits Mme. de Donnissan seeing some wild narcissus gathered a few and pinned them to her daughter's dress, saying: "Well, my child, *à la garde de Dieu*, I have the feeling that Providence will save us to-day," and in fact, after wandering about for a long time, half dead with cold and hunger, they met the devoted Marianne bringing them some

soup and returned home with her. Mme. de Lescure's biographer tells us that the little incident of the narcissus, and the contrast between such a decoration and the state of destitution she was in, so impressed her, that even many years later she could not look at these flowers without an involuntary shiver of fear. "They spoke to her of perils, of proscription, of the scaffold."

About this time Mme. de Donnissan, in her maternal anxiety and putting aside all her former ideas of what was due to her rank, made the proposal that Mme. de Lescure should marry Pierre Rialleau, an old widower with five children. Two Vendean women had already married Bretons and had henceforth been left in peace by the Republicans; hence this curious plan for Mme. de Lescure's safety. Happily, however, although all the preparations were made for the wedding, a new alarm came to prevent its taking place and the poor ladies had to hurry off to the little hamlet of Bois Divet; but as the enemy were about to search this place also, they were conducted to Bournelière, in the parish of Prinquiaux, by a good carter called Cyprien.

Here they hid themselves in a deserted hut on the outskirts of the village, and here they were destined to remain for a month, for Mme. de Lescure was taken prematurely ill and gave birth to twin daughters on April 20th. "I had made no preparations, not thinking the time was near, and my little ones had to be wrapped in rags. I wanted to nurse them, but my mother showed me that it was not possible... three days later a priest came and baptised them in my

room. I had them called Joséphine and Louise. We got four witnesses and the registers of baptism were scratched on two pewter plates with a nail, and then buried in the ground. I was comforted that this could be done and that some trace was thus preserved of my poor children's real names." The babies were given in charge of two peasant women to be nursed and, thanks to the hut being considered uninhabitable, the poor ladies spent a quiet month, the first real repose they had enjoyed since they left Savenay; but another sorrow marked their sojourn here, as one of the babies died on May 2nd. Mme. de Lescure was informed of this loss very suddenly—by a girl entering her room crying out: "'Your daughter at Bois Divet is dead.' I replied, 'she is happier than I,' and I began to weep."

CHAPTER XVI.

DEATH OF HENRI DE LA ROCHEJAQUELEIN.

WHILE Mme. de Lescure was spending the dreary winter we have described, terrible things were taking place in La Vendée. As we have seen, only a remnant of the Royalist army escaped the final disaster at Savenay, and before that M. de la Rochejaquelein had been cut off from his friends after crossing the Loire at Ancenis. As M. de Bouëre rejoined the hero soon after this time we will follow his narrative about events of which Mme. de Lescure was naturally ignorant; but first it is our painful duty to realise the frightful condition of the country under the new Terror inaugurated by General Turreau; and we will consider it from the point of view of a contemporary Republican author.

After describing the total defeat of the Royalist cause at Savenay, and the ineffectual efforts of its officers to raise troops, M. Clémanceau uses these strong words:[1] "If the war was rekindled in the *Haute Vendée* it was less owing to the influence of the Royalist chiefs than to the execution of the sanguinary projects of a Republican general." He goes on to quote the report made by a deputy of the west to the

[1] *Hist. de la Guerre de la Vendée*, Clémanceau.

Convention on the occasion of a great debate in the Chamber on September 29th, 1794. "Some of the generals of the army of the west," says this plain-spoken witness, "have made of the civil war a subject of speculation and personal interest. Their salaries and the funds placed at their disposal for extraordinary expenses have been a source of illicit profit for them. They have speculated on the results of pillage and favoured the guilty acts of their men. . . . Soldiers have been seen to insult women and then murder them; the inhabitants of some of the communes having come with their municipal officers, wearing the tricolour scarf, to welcome the soldiers, were received at first in a kind of fraternal way, and were then soon afterwards surrounded by the troops and shot as spies and rebels."

But all this fades before the horrors committed by Turreau and his *Colonnes infernales*, as they were justly termed. Turreau was appointed general of the army of the west about the time of the siege of Savenay. Determined to crush the unhappy people, he organised an expedition which he himself termed "A Promenade in La Vendée," by which twelve columns of Blues were to overrun the country, and among his orders given on this occasion occurs the following sinister paragraph: "Every means will be employed to discover the rebels; *all will be bayonetted.* The villages, small towns, farms, woods and, generally speaking, all that can be burnt is to be given over to the flames; to facilitate this each column shall be preceded by fifty pioneers to break down any obstacle in the way of the flames."

Only twelve villages or towns were excepted from this list in an area of about twenty-five leagues, containing over six hundred townships. It is to be noted that General Turreau in his report to the Convention of what he was about to do, and to which he received no reply, did not mention his intention of putting to death the inhabitants, but in an official document addressed to him later on these words occur: "Exterminate the brigands to the last man—that is your duty."

"The troops," says M. de Clémanceau, "hastened to fulfil their orders, and when the officers in command sent in their reports to the general, all spoke of their zeal in the execution of his orders and said that they were burning villages, farms, and châteaux. Some mentioned the terrible use of the bayonet, and some even boasted of murdering women and girls. These appalling scenes of murders and burnings were prolonged for ten days. The result was what might have been expected—those who had submitted and sincerely desired peace were forced to rise again." General Turreau's order is dated January 17, 1794, the same month in which la Rochejaquelein was to lose his life for the cause to which he had devoted himself so ardently.

After the disaster on the banks of the Loire Henri de la Rochejaquelein took refuge in the forest of Saint Lézin, but we must let M. de Bouëre relate the incidents that followed. "The columns belonging to General Turreau," he says, "entered the Vendean territory on January 21; they killed, ravaged and burnt everything. Hesitation was impossible; in

this desperate extremity Cathelineau (the younger) and I tried to gather the men, and succeeded in getting a good many together in the *lande* of Cabournes not far from Jallais.... As we had just heard that la Rochejaquelein was in the wood of Saint Lézin, we disbanded our men till the next day, begging them to bring back with them all the men who could fight; we told them it was the only way to stop the fires and massacres... and we promised them that they should have the chief of the *Grande Armée* at their head."

On the 23rd la Rochejaquelein was, as stated, in the wood of Saint Lézin, and with him a few Royalists. Word was sent to the Republican General Cordellier that there were some *brigands* in the wood, but he paid little attention to the report. The informant however (Thubert) was pursued by the Royalists as he was returning home, and he went back to tell Cordellier this and that the officer who was with him had been shot. The general then sent to search the wood and found nobody; he therefore had the unfortunate Thubert shot as an alarmist.

"It had been la Rochejaquelein and his escort who had killed the officer, and the Vendean general now left off his disguise and putting on the blue uniform coat of the Republican mounted his horse. On January 24th he found himself near a mill in the neighbourhood of Cabournes at the head of a large body of men, accompanied also by Stofflet with some twenty other recruits. They directed their course in the direction of the flames which were rising on all sides, and above Névy, near a watermill, they encountered a battalion of the enemy who were

occupied in setting fire to it. As may be believed there was no lack of ardour in the attack made by the peasants. The Blues after a weak resistance fled, throwing down their hats, bags and arms, not in the direction of Saint Christine from whence they came, but towards Saint Laurent de la Plaine." The Vendeans pursued the enemy, and went on to Saint Christine and Jumelière. This village they found still burning, for before leaving Cordellier had set fire to it, killing all the poor inhabitants.

Chemillé was taken by the Royalists, and after passing through Trémentine their little army bivouacked in the forest of Vezins. "From January 26th to the 28th we passed two very fatiguing nights in the wood, as owing to terrible rain we could not light our fires, and all this to wait for the recruits promised by Stofflet, which were not many owing to the incendiaries who were ravaging Maulevrier and its neighbourhood. We had been told that M. de Brue had assembled two thousand men and we wanted to join them; we therefore left the wood; when we reached the high road near Maillé we were warned that some of the enemy's volunteers were exercising the usual cruelties. We did not seek a fight, for our men were tired and their arms were in bad condition, but as the Republicans were not numerous we wanted to rescue their victims. We saw a soldier flying at our approach, and a few cavaliers were sent after him with Piquet, who was very courageous, at their head.

M. de la Rochejaquelein, who was eager to do something, left us to follow them. Piquet had nearly reached the volunteer, when the latter, despairing of

escape, placed himself against a tree and was about to shoot at Piquet; he then perceived a fine-looking cavalier whom, by his dress, he knew to be one of the Vendean chiefs. Without a moment's hesitation he turned his gun and shot him in the forehead. La Rochejaquelein fell from his horse dead. The Republican paid with his life for the service he had thus rendered to his party."

In this terrible emergency, as the last honours could not be rendered to the Vendean general, it was desired at least to prevent his body from being recognised and insulted. A cockade taken from the dead Republican was attached to the hero's hat, and the body was placed upright against a hedge near the high road, so that if the Blues passed they might think it was one of their own men. The error was the more likely to occur as M. de la Rochejaquelein was still wearing the coat he had taken from the enemy a few days before.

The ruse succeeded perfectly, for Turreau, who tried to find out later whether the general was really dead, failed to find evidence of the fact. M. Henri's faithful followers came secretly and buried their hero, Langevin, the brave Vendéenne, being among the number. The news of de la Rochejaquelein's death was a terrible blow to the little army so recently formed. "We were quite crushed," says M. de Bouëre. "Stofflet rushed to the scene of this tragic event, but I had not the heart to do so," and in view of the rumours that Stofflet had been antagonistic to the general-in-chief in those latter days, M. de Bouëre's words are of importance. "In spite of what has

been said, Stofflet was," he declares, "like us, very much affected by la Rochejaquelein's death, anyhow at first."

M. de Bouëre complains of the many errors and inaccuracies he had found in the histories of the Revolution published in his time, beginning with that of General Turreau, and states that Mme. de Lescure herself had been misinformed on various points concerning her relations in matters of which she had no personal knowledge; such as the date of the hero's death, which she places on February 1st instead of on January 28th.

"If Rochejaquelein had been an ordinary man," as he very truly says, "and if it was wished to increase his fame, he might be treated like many others; he might be placed at the head of armies on occasions where he did not appear, but the young hero did not need this to immortalise him. By his intrepidity and other qualities he was without doubt the most chivalrous of the Vendean chiefs. There is not a single reproach to be made to him—a rare thing."

Mme. de Bouëre also adds her words of praise to the memory of the youthful general, for as she remarks, "What constitutes the most perfect testimony to la Rochejaquelein and his soldiers is the resolution taken by the latter to hide the misfortune which had befallen them, so as not to discourage the new Royalist attempt. It is worthy of note that they faithfully kept this resolve and the fact was long unknown, for they would say *they were going to rejoin M. de la Rochejaquelein.* This was attested at the time of the enquiry held regarding this sorrowful

event, some time later. Like Duguesclin, the hero survived himself: the battles gained by the Vendeans were won in his name."

The fatal news of her cousin's death only reached Mme. de Lescure much later but she was now soon to hear, quite accidentally, of her father's fate. While she was laid up Mme. de Donnissan received an anonymous letter from a person who expressed great sympathy with the two ladies and offered to find them a safer place of concealment. "This was followed by a second letter in which the writer offered to come and fetch us," says Mme. de Lescure, and accordingly on May 10th a young lady of twenty-three called Félicité des Ressources arrived. She was the daughter of an old inhabitant of the *bourg* of Guenrouet, five leagues from Prinquiaux. Félicité took a special interest in the fate of the poor Vendeans and spent her time in rendering them services, generally without her parents' knowledge, as they were very timorous." She came to implore the ladies to take refuge at the Château de Dréneuc, near Guenrouet, with Mme. Desmoustiers, who farmed the place, and after much discussion this was decided upon.

The municipality of Prinquiaux gave the ladies passports under the name of Jeanne and Marie Jagu, and their old friend Ferret promised to come and claim them as friends should they be arrested. "We started, Mlle. de Ressources on horseback, my mother and I together, still dressed as poor peasant women, on a horse without a saddle. Pierre Rialleau conducted us. I made a détour to go and embrace my child at her nurse's house." The party had one

or two alarms as the Blues were about, and presently the good Rialleau—the same who had been destined to be Mme. de Lescure's husband—was sent back. "It was useless to expose him to danger," she says, "especially as our passports were signed by him. This excellent man left us in tears; he took off his finger a silver ring, such as is worn by the Breton peasants, and gave it to me. I have worn it ever since." This little incident brings a breath of romance into the sad record of danger and suffering. Two other peasants, not knowing Mme. de Lescure's rank, tried to win her affections during her wanderings, one being the young miller near Lagrée.

As the little party approached Guenrouet they were joined by a Republican officer who was a great admirer of Mlle. de Ressources. "Well, Mademoiselle," he said, "you see I am come unarmed, as you told me not to wear even a sword when I walk with you. Some day the *brigands* will murder me, but you won't care." "You know they are my friends," was her reply, "and I will save you." "I much fear," he retorted, "that I am now between four *brigandes*." "No," said Félicité, "but you are with four Aristocrats." The officer pretended not to hear, and even when Mme. de Lescure was asked to take his arm, and declined in probably doubtful *patois*, he said nothing. She says she dared not accept his arm because of the whiteness of her hands, which, in spite of all her efforts to darken them, she constantly feared would betray her.

At Dréneuc Mme. Desmoustiers received the fugitives with open arms. "She was forty years of

age and had a delicate, gentle face; she had a feeble look which concealed a strong, impassioned soul; her affection for the cause we had defended was deep, and this feeling, united to great natural kindness, inspired her with a boundless zeal and courage in helping the Vendeans. She was poor but singularly disinterested." Mme. Desmoustiers' three sons were all anxious to join the insurgents whenever the opportunity occurred. Her one daughter, Marie Louise, a girl of fifteen, was very beautiful. The château itself was a poor house and very inconvenient, but it was situated in splendid woods, where many other fugitives were in hiding. Mme. de Lescure and her mother found other guests already at Dréneuc—a priest, a Vendean child and three deserters. Mme. Desmoustiers soon discovered that her new guests had for long heard no news from the outer world. She was herself aware of M. de Donnissan's death, but she kept the fact secret as long as she could and took every precaution not to let the ladies see the newspapers.

Dréneuc was situated in the large parish of Frégréac, which numbered some three thousand souls; but among them all there was not one whom the Royalists could not trust, says Mme. de Lescure. "These good people were so entirely of one mind in such matters that the Vicaire, Abbé Orain, never left the neighbourhood; no day passed that he did not say Mass in one place or another; he gave the sacraments to the dying, and resigned as he was to martyrdom, to the risk of which he daily exposed himself, nothing happened to him." Mme. Desmoustiers was the

kindest of hostesses, and although even in this solitude the Blues made domiciliary visits, the family would meet the soldiers, talk to them and offer them drinks so that they generally forgot to search the house.

One day the precautions taken to keep all sad news from the ladies failed, and a newspaper was found by Mme. de Donnissan in which she read of the execution of sixty-six persons in Paris, some of whom were known to her, and had formed part of the old, happy *réunions* at Versailles. "It was a very sad surprise for us," relates Mme. de Lescure, "to learn that not only our provinces but all France lay under the most bloody tyranny." A few days later news came of the fall and death of Robespierre; but this great event, while arresting the Terror in Paris, did not at first affect the provinces, and this was, she says, the most dangerous moment for those who, like herself and her mother, were among the "proscribed."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DAWN OF PEACE.

ONE day, shortly after the events we have recorded, Mme. de Lescure went with Mlle. Desmoustiers, a little cousin of hers and a young nun, also an exile, to gather plums in the garden of the small Château of la Chapelle. It is pleasant to think of our heroine being able to do anything so peaceful and commonplace after all she had gone through, but unfortunately the little excursion had disastrous results. While the ladies were engaged in picking the fruit a young peasant approached and spoke to one of the Desmoustiers, who whispered to Mme. de Lescure that he was M. Barbaud, who had fought for the Royalists and was now in hiding. "I left them to talk," she says, "and went on alone to pick plums. A fortnight later the unhappy young man was taken while hiding under his mother's bed and murdered before her eyes. His pockets were searched and a letter was found from his sister which said, 'The person you saw at la Chapelle with Mlle. Desmoustiers and Sister Saint Xavier, and whom you took for a peasant, is Mme. de Lescure, aged twenty-two. She and her mother are hidden somewhere in the parish of Frégréac.'"

The Republicans lost no time in surrounding the Châteaux of la Chapelle and Dréneuc with soldiers, but happily the ladies in question had no idea that their secret was known, and thought it was one of the usual visitations of the enemy, and in spite of a domiciliary visit at night, they were not recognised. The Blues, however, made a great search outside and inside: like some folk of our own day they expected to find "false doors, trap doors, *souterrains*." At last their anger at finding nothing caused them to carry off all the municipal officers of Frégréac, and the notary of la Chapelle.

Through the questions put to them these good people first heard of the presence of the ladies under their disguised names, but they loyally kept silence, though their silence might have cost them their lives, and we are glad to think that they were released next day. The notary's first act was to go to Dréneuc to give warning. Here he met Mme. de Donnissan and recognised her with such astonishment that he nearly fainted, having, until then, had no idea who the fugitives really were.

After this serious fright it was thought better for the ladies to change their residence for a time, but after a week, as there was no fresh alarm and they heard they were supposed to have gone elsewhere, they returned to Dréneuc. For greater safety, Mme. de Lescure now passed the night in a neighbouring farm, and each morning to keep up her disguise she arrived at the Château, leading a cow. At Dréneuc they saw, several times, an old gentleman, M. de la Bréjolière of Nantes, who was also in hiding;

but who retained his former habits as far as possible, in spite of danger and misery. "He was a very amiable old gentleman. He had disguised himself as a peasant, but underneath that dress he wore fine linen, lace cuffs, a watch and perfumes. He made pretty *vers de société* and attached so much importance to them that, one day when he was repeating some to my mother and we received warning of a visit from the Blues, he could not make up his mind to go without finishing them, and went off reciting them aloud to us."

This comparatively quiet time at Dréneuc went on till October, 1794, and latterly each day things became easier and the political atmosphere calmer; but the poor ladies, who received no news of what was going on in France, "had no plans and no hopes" for the future. The Blues now occupied all their energies in preventing supplies of wheat from entering Nantes, and a second regiment of chasseurs, which in happier times had been under old M. de Lescure's command, was engaged in this odious duty. The eldest Desmoustiers had been forced to join this regiment; he often brought his comrades to Dréneuc, and Mme. de Lescure had the curious experience of hearing her own fate discussed by them. "I often heard them wondering what had happened to their former colonel's daughter-in-law. Some said I had been sabred, some drowned, but all thought I was dead, which greatly reassured me."

Presently the ladies heard that a man had been making enquiries about them, and that he had been seized and imprisoned at Blain. Being still under a

happy illusion as to M. de Donnissan's fate, they had a hope that the messenger might be seeking them on his behalf, but now their kind hostess thought it no longer right to conceal the news of his death and told Mme. de Lescure of her loss. "Mme. Desmoustiers confessed the sad truth to me," she says, "and I learnt that he had perished on the scaffold at Angers." She had the courage, which to some of us may seem misplaced, to conceal the dreadful fact from her mother, who only knew of it positively three years later. "All that time she remained in doubt, or rather kept such utter silence on the subject that neither she herself nor anyone else dared to break it."

Day by day things began to improve, prisons were thrown open, and a general amnesty was proclaimed. Good old M. de la Bréjolière profited by this, and several Vendeans followed his example, but Mme. de Lescure could not believe in peace, in spite of her mother's more hopeful views. "At first the idea seemed revolting to me," she says. "I did not trust the amnesty. I could not bear the thought of receiving favours from the Republicans, or of abandoning La Vendée . . . it seemed to me that de Lescure's widow should show no weakness, and that it would be cowardly in me to abandon even the smallest remnant of the Vendeans which might still exist." To her mother's representations that women could only accept what they could not alter, Mme. de Lescure replied by tears and indignation.

Just at this time the young Desmoustiers and a friend deserted the Blue chasseur regiment and came to say adieu to the ladies before joining the Royalists.

As Mme. de Lescure says: "I suffered and felt humiliated to see this family so devoted to the Vendeans; this young man who after saving us was now embracing our cause, while we were about to abandon it... I gave these gentlemen letters for MM. de la Rochejaquelein and de Marigny, who I thought were still living.... They were well received by the army, and M. de Charette made M. Desmoustiers an officer on the spot."

However, presently, as her mother continued to discuss the amnesty, Mme. de Lescure determined to find out how things really were and she courageously rode to Nantes disguised as a peasant carrying chickens in her hands. She went first to a friend of Mme. Desmoustiers and there found the two maids, Mme. Carria and her own faithful Agathe, just released from prison, the latter of whom had escaped great dangers. Although nearly every one was now free, Mme. de Bonchamps, widow of the great general, was still detained, and Mme. de Lescure went to see her and was urged by her to profit by the amnesty and to appeal to M. Haudaudine, one of the famous ex-prisoners of Saint Florent and a great protector of the Vendeans.

M. de Charette was already *en pourparler* for peace, as Mme. de Lescure expresses it, and she found that there was now nothing humiliating in the relations established between the two parties at Nantes. As for those Vendeans who had been imprisoned they received a warm welcome, were treated with respect, and it was even forbidden, under pain of three days' imprisonment, to call them *brigands*; in the pompous

style of the day they were to be given the name of *frères égarés*. All this encouraged Mme. de Lescure to consent to her mother's wish, and on her return to Dréneuc it was decided that the ladies should leave for Nantes the next day.

Mme. de Lescure was obliged once more to say adieu to her little girl as she dared not risk moving her. She made an expedition to Prinquiaux for this purpose, lost her way, and suffered terribly from the cold, but had the happiness of finding the child "well and pretty," though not strong.

On reaching Nantes the ladies went at once to have their amnesty papers arranged. M. Ruelle, one of the officials, settled everything for them kindly but in a truly Republican manner. "The gentleman came in," says Mme. de Lescure, "with an *empressé* air and said, 'Mesdames, you are come to enjoy peace.' He approached to embrace me, but I drew back, looking cross, and he did not insist. I was still in peasant's dress. He signed the amnesty. We then went into another room and we were asked where we had hidden, but we replied in a vague way, and the act of indemnity was given to us. It ran thus: 'Liberté, Egalité, Paix aux bons, Guerre aux méchants, Justice à tous. Les représentans ont admis à l'amnestie *telle personne* qui a déclaré s'être cacheé pour sa sureté personnelle.'"

Naturally the ladies did not wish to stay long at Nantes, and during their stay there lived in great retirement, but it was a consolation to them to meet old friends and to talk over the sorrows and anguishes all had passed through. Mme. de Bonchamps, for

instance, had spent a terrible time, trying to escape with her children: sometimes she hid in a farmhouse, but more often in the hollow of a tree, and during this time she and her boy and girl all took smallpox, and the former died. After three months of this life she was taken and sent to Nantes where, fortunately, she was eventually saved by the fall of Robespierre and by the exertions of M. Haudaudine.

Mme. d'Autichamps, mother of the young officer we have before mentioned, managed to disguise herself so thoroughly that she was engaged as cow-keeper by the administrator of a certain district, and for a year performed her duties so well that she was never suspected. When rumours of an amnesty reached her, she resolved, after long hesitation, to ask her master if it was true. "And what does it matter to you, good woman?" was his reply. "Monsieur, it is because I once knew some *brigands*. How are they now received?" "With open arms." "But, Monsieur, the wives of generals and people of mark, are they well received also?" "Better still." Mme. d'Autichamps then made herself known to her astonished master, who being a kind man, was much distressed and reproached her with tears in his eyes for keeping her secret and for not trusting him. Many other Vendean ladies did the same sort of thing and became like real peasant women, cultivating the ground, keeping animals, etc.

Mme. de Lescure says that in the very midst of the horrors enacted in their city many persons were saved by the Nantais; three priests remained hidden in the town, and other acts of courageous charity on behalf

of the fugitives could also be recorded. "Some ladies," she says, "were forgotten in prison as if by miracle. Mme. de Beauvolliers, Mme. and Mlle. de la Marsonnière, Mlle. de Mondion and others were also found there when peace came, but the greater number who were taken prisoners perished on the scaffold or were drowned. They all showed a noble courage in dying, disavowing nothing of their principles or opinion. The peasants, men and women, showed no less heroism and enthusiasm, and as they died repeated, "Vive le roi! we are going to heaven."

It was at Nantes that Mme. de Lescure heard of the death of M. de la Rochejaquelein and of the gallant M. de Marigny, and the accounts of these deaths must have opened afresh the wounds of her many sorrows. The latter's fate is incomparably the most tragic, for he was condemned to death by his own side. The history of the disagreement between the unfortunate gentleman and his fellow officers, M. de Marigny's hasty conduct, and the irregular court martial, followed by a too hasty application of its sentence, may be read elsewhere. It was Stofflet's misfortune and fault to confirm the sentence under the advice of an unnamed officer, whose knowledge of military law was very small. As Mme. de Bouëre relates, her husband "infinitely regretted that he arrived too late to intervene, for he was convinced that Stofflet would have given in to the reasons he could have shown" and which had prevailed on another similar occasion.

There was general consternation in the army when Stofflet's violent act was known, and as the inhabitants of Cérizay were much attached to M. de Marigny

they made up their minds to retire from Stofflet's command. The little house of Girardine near Cérizay had been the scene of the general's death. The soldiers sent to execute the sentence found him living there very quietly, as he had been ill. "He had only his servants with him," says Mme. de Lescure "and could not believe in the horrible news . . . at last when he saw they really intended his death he asked for a confessor, but was harshly refused. He went into the garden and said to the soldiers, 'It is my place to command you, place yourselves in line,' and then he cried out *fire* and fell dead. Of all the Vendeans surely none died in so lamentable a manner, but," she adds, "few of the leaders left a memory so cherished as did M. de Marigny. He had so many considerate plans for the welfare of La Vendée and was so occupied with measures to save the country from the devastations of the Republicans, that the peasants were full of gratitude and attachment for him."

Amidst these sad memories Mme. de Lescure also describes an experience which occurred to her at Nantes, and which is similar to that recorded by Sir Walter of her later years. "The few persons who saw me," she says, "and who had not known me before, were much astonished at my appearance. Report had given to the Vendean ladies and to me in particular, such a military reputation that *Mme. de Lescure* was imagined to be a big, tall woman, who had fought with sabres and feared nothing! I was obliged to disavow all my *hauts faits* and to confess quite simply how frightened and weak I had felt at the least danger."

The two ladies now wished to leave for Médoc, and another visit to the municipality was necessary to obtain passports for *Victoire Salugues* and *Marie Citran*, the names, family ones really, now assumed by them. Mme. de Lescure gives an amusing account of her adventures.

"I went to the municipality," she says, "still dressed as a peasant. Many others were waiting there and were rudely treated by the officials; a nun was in front of me, the municipality, who like the *representant*, were very nice to those they had lately persecuted, were very civil to her and this encouraged me. I advanced and was even better treated. At the word *amnistiée*, everyone rose and bowed to me, addressing me as *Madame;* they showed me great politeness and even offered to assist me, and this cordiality was only for poor *Victoire*, whose sole title of Vendean won her those attentions, while good *patriots* were treated uncivilly."

The ladies had purchased a carriage at Nantes and the journey must have offered many contrasts to their weary wanderings up to this time, but the shadow of past sorrows was everywhere, and Mme. de Lescure who had cherished a sort of hope that her eldest child was still alive, had the fatal news confirmed. "I stopped near Ancenis to see the people to whom I had confided my eldest girl, for I tried still to doubt of her death and imagined that the report of it had been spread about to ensure her greater safety. I was so persuaded of this that I rashly offered the people 3,000 francs if they would restore my daughter to me. They might have passed off another child as mine, but

instead of that they gave me back the money I had left with them originally for my child's support."

At Ancenis the authorities would not allow the travellers to proceed without an escort, because the Royalists were showing themselves in force on the road to Angers, and as the ladies dared not say they had no fear of the *brigands*, they had to wait two days for one of General Canclaux's *aide-de-camps*, who was expected. "He knew who we were, and had the civility to let our carriage go first, thinking, I imagine, that we would be a better defence against the Royalists than the sixteen hussars of our escort. Thus we were protected by the *Blues* against the *Brigands*, and this distressed me, but after Angers there was no need for an escort."

At last they reached Bordeaux on February 8th, 1794, and here heard that owing to M. de Courcy, Mme. de Lescure's uncle's illness, he had escaped persecution, and the Château of Citran had been preserved for the family. The two ladies were received by their friends with joy mixed with fear, for they seemed unable to believe in the amnesty, details of which had not yet reached Bordeaux. "Everyone hurried to see us, and looked upon us as something extraordinary. We went to the office to have our passports registered, still dressed *en paysanne*: we were received respectfully but coldly. The Commissaries wanted to make us a little exhortation, and said they supposed they could count on our repentance; this expression offended me, and I got red, and looked at him in a way which alarmed my friends: nothing happened, however, and we returned peacefully to Citran."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MME. DE LESCURE MARRIES M. LOUIS DE LA ROCHEJAQUELEIN.

With her arrival at Bordeaux Mme. de Lescure's story, in so far as it is connected with the war in La Vendée, comes to a close, though till the end of her exceptionally long life she was destined through her family connections and through her own deep interest in that country to be ever, as she would have said, a true *Vendéenne de la Veille Roche*.

Only three years had passed since her happy marriage, which, as may be remembered, took place at Citran. "What events, what misfortunes, what tears and bloodshed, what graves in the few years!" and could she have foreseen the future, there were many sorrows still to come, one of which followed closely on her return to her old home. "The amnesty did not bring my misfortunes to an end," she says, "but those I have experienced since are less interesting: they concern me alone. I lost my little girl when she was six months old, and just when I was hoping to see her again; by the law I became her inheritrix, and according to the will made by him I succeeded to all M. de Lescure's property." But she was so overwhelmed by sorrow that had not her family and friends insisted on her claiming her rights, she would perhaps have lost

her fortune. Presently another trouble came to disturb the quiet of Citran. "When the crisis of the 18th *Fructador* came," she continues, "it was discovered that I was on the list of émigrés, and I received orders to leave France under pain of death, like the other émigrés, whose names had not been scratched out of the list. Yet it was quite clear that I had not left France. I went into Spain all alone, my mother not being on the list. I passed eight months on the Spanish frontier; there I found noble sentiments of kindness and sympathy for the unfortunate."

Happily Mme. de Donnissan obtained her daughter's recall to France, but presently she was again expelled under pain of being shot, and her possessions were confiscated.

"I returned to my kind Spaniards," she says, "who had before given me shelter. I passed ten months with them, and it was there that I began to write these *Mémoires*. After these months I returned to France, where everything had changed since the 18th *Brumaire*." Mme. de Lescure found her fortune and properties intact, and speaks gratefully of the efforts made on her behalf, in memory of her husband, and by persons unknown to her, to preserve what by the late law could have been sold.

We have now come to the last page of Mme. de Lescure's *Mémoires*, and must give it as it stands in its simplicity and sincerity before we seek other testimony to the later years of her life.

"I was now free, rich, and still young: my mother pressed me to marry again. At first I thought I ought to live only to mourn those I had lost; that after so

much sorrow it would be a duty to shun all happiness. "It occurred to me to devote my fortune and my services to some hospital to help the poor wounded Vendeans who had fought beside me and whose misery I had shared. But it is the way of the world to look on such projects as dreams of the imagination. In our generation they are treated as folly. I ended by listening to my mother's counsels.

"I did not wish, however, to lose a name which was so dear to me and so glorious. I did not want to give up all memory of La Vendée and begin a new existence. There are circumstances with which one's whole life should be connected. So I could not decide to obey my mother until the day I met M. Louis de la Rochejaquelein [Henri's brother] in Poitou. By marrying him I felt I should still be a Vendéenne, we should unite two names that ought not to be separated, and I should not be offending against the memory of him I had loved so deeply. I married M. Louis de la Rochejaquelein on March 1st, 1802. Since then I have always lived in the country, only seeking and asking from heaven for peace and obscurity, which is all that is needed by those who have suffered great afflictions."

Eight years had elapsed since Mme. de la Rochejaquelein left La Vendée. All her valiant friends of the "*Great Wars*" had died in battle or had been executed by the enemy, and to our heroine, who had suffered and done so much before she was twenty-two, it must have seemed as if a century had passed over her life and over France, bearing with it all the familiar landmarks of her youth.

Happy years have no history, it is said, and the de la Rochejaqueleins lived for many years quietly at Citran or at Clisson, which was again rendered habitable, but there were moments of danger and sorrow, as was only to be expected. In the first days of the empire Fouché's police watched the family narrowly, and sometimes placed spies in the château, but the latter did not stay long, as they declared there were no secrets to discover among people who were openly and whole-heartedly Royalist. Napoleon's government made overtures to the Marquis de la Rochejaquelein, and tried to gain him to the Imperial cause, but he was proof against all offers of power or place, remaining inflexible in his opinions.

Finally, some friends used their influence with the Emperor so that the de la Rochejaqueleins should be left in peace. Amongst these M. de Monbadon must be specially mentioned. He was Mme. de Donnissan's first cousin, and had married Mlle. de Terrefut, a near relation of the Empress Josephine. Some years after the de la Rochejaqueleins' marriage, and when their young family were growing up around them, the Emperor and Empress came to Bordeaux. M. de la Rochejaquelein left Citran for Clisson when he heard of the projected visit, but Mme. de la Rochejaquelein was unable to travel. She and her mother remained in great retirement at Citran, feeling, however, very anxious as to the effect of their determination not to appear at the Imperial Court.

M. de Monbadon was soon able to reassure them by sending word of a talk he had had with Napoleon during a boating trip. "You have the Rochejaquelein

family down here, have you not?" said the Emperor. M. de Monbadon explained his relationship to the family, the presence of the ladies and children at Citran and the absence of the master of the house, and was much surprised by Napoleon's reply. "He is a good young man; I was much attached to Lescure: he was a fine fellow;" to which Duroc, who was in attendance, added, "his widow could only marry a de la Rochejaquelein." In fact, Napoleon had a sincere admiration for a gallant foe, and for the Vendeans in general. He called them "a race of giants," and said he should be proud to be a Vendean.

It was about this time that the de la Rochejaqueleins made the acquaintance of M. de Barante, who so ably assisted our heroine in the composition of the *Mémoires*. No doubt they first met at Clisson, as M. de Barante was made *sous-prefet* of Bressuire before being appointed *prefet* of La Vendée. He was still quite a young man, but he had already had a distinguished career; his liberal views and the friendship entertained by his father, then *prefet* of Geneva, for M. Necker, Mme. de Staël, and their friends who were opposed to Napoleon, caused the young man to be sent to Bressuire as a kind of disgrace.

M. de Barante, however, filled his position with dignity, and threw himself warmly into the interests of his new country. "He had the courage not to abandon any of his ideas, and to apply to La Vendée, where *Chouannerie* might be considered still dormant, a policy of fraternity and good faith." He did more, for he became deeply interested in the people and in

the history of the war. He felt a sincere admiration for the simple, manly virtues of the Vendeans. Such sentiments must have made a friendship with the survivors of the great wars very easy, and Mme. de la Rochejaquelein soon found that their new friend was as eager as her husband that the story of her adventures should be completed. Her manuscript was confided to M. de Barante, who read it with lively interest and offered to arrange and correct the papers. This was gratefully accepted, and when the MS. was completed M. de la Rochejaquelein begged his wife to allow it to be shown to a few mutual friends.

In her preface to the sixth edition of the *Mémoires*, Mme. de la Rochejaquelein gives the following interesting account of this first appearance of the manuscript, in which the reference to Talleyrand's determination to be included among its readers is most curious and characteristic.

"In confiding my *Mémoires* to M. de Barante," she says, "I wished to make the condition that no one should see them. He asked me, however, to allow him to read his manuscript to his father at Geneva and to a few friends in Paris—for example, M. Matthieu de Montmorency and Prince Adrien de Laval. M. de la Rochejaquelein, who attached much more importance to those *Mémoires* than I did, said that he was quite willing, and that it was wrong of me to be so discreet. M. de Barante went to Geneva, and gave some readings there and in Paris. I learnt this from my cousin, Count, afterwards Duc de Lorges. Although I had always looked upon him as a brother, he, like all my relations and friends, was quite unaware that I had

written any *Mémoires*, so he wrote me that someone was using my name, and that he was telling everyone that the pretended *Mémoires* of Mme. de Lescure were apocryphal.

"I wrote to M. de Barante to complain that he was extending my husband's permission further than I liked. I said I feared that this might draw down trouble upon us... M. de Barante then stopped the readings, but as we still heard that several copies of the manuscript were in circulation, he made enquiries and found out the following circumstance. He had lent the manuscript to M. Matthieu de Montmorency for two days, and the latter lent it to his mother, the Viscomtesse de Laval, for twenty-four hours. The Prince de Talleyrand, who as a rule went to her house every evening, found her reading my *Mémoires*; he insisted that she should lend the book to him, but the Viscomtesse said that she could not do so, having faithfully promised to return it to me next morning. M. de Talleyrand began to laugh, saying: 'Those *Mémoires* must certainly be very curious, but it is not necessary that you should be so hurried in reading them.' He rang the bell and said, 'Let this manuscript be taken to the Foreign Office; there are twenty-four copy-books; let twenty-four clerks copy them to-night, and return them to me to-morrow morning, sewn together as they now are. That,' said he gravely to Mme. de Laval, 'is a good way of reading a manuscript quietly.' M. de Talleyrand took this copy to the Emperor, who kept it for a fortnight.[1] Other copies of the manu-

[1] It is said that a copy of the *Mémoires* was found in Napoleon's carriage after Waterloo, and that it is now preserved in the archives of a noble Scotch family.

script, made presumably from this one, found their way to a select circle of readers, and the most distinguished *salons* in Paris and in the country wished to share in these touching reminiscences. Things came to such a pass that M. de Barante had to approach M. de Pommereul, Director-General of Libraries, who gave severe orders that this book, which seemed likely to revive Royalist feeling, should not be published."[1]

At this stage of her life Mme. de la Rochejaquelein's biographer uses words with which, we think, all her readers will agree. "These *Mémoires*," he says, "will make La Vendée, its people and country, live for ever in the imagination of her readers. We have known these men and have lived with them, loved them and wept for them—we have lived the life of the *Bocage* in the midst of the valiant and pious army in which peasant officers were the equals of noblemen. It is a noble book, written not to excite the admiration of its readers, but by a daughter, a sister, a widow, a mother, to tell her children the glorious details of the deaths of their relatives, and by one who thought that a simple history written by herself would inspire them with a more tender and filial sentiment for these memories." The date of the actual publication of the *Mémoires* was fixed by the return of the Monarchy in 1814, and as the quotation given above shows, several editions of the interesting work have appeared and it has become a classic.

[1] MSS. Preface to 6th edition of *Mémoires*. See Œuvres de Cardinal Pie, vol. 6.

CHAPTER XIX.

LAST YEARS OF MME. DE LA ROCHEJAQUELEIN.

WHILE Mme. de la Rochejaquelein had been occupied with records of the past, her mother was busying herself with new Royalist hopes for France. Mme. de Donnissan had, for some special reason which is not mentioned, been given a kind of *Mandat* on the part of *Monsieur* the Comte d'Artois, to rally the Royalists of Bordeaux. She therefore threw herself into the projects and plans of the moment far more than did her daughter who saw no hopes of success for the cause. During the first and triumphant period of Napoleon's reign these plots had died away in the south as well as in the west, but as time went on and one war followed another, men began to think that the Emperor would exhaust his good fortune, and when the Russian campaign was determined upon his adversaries prophesied utter defeat.

The event justified their views. "Napoleon's disastrous retreat, the annihilation of his army... the discontent excited by the continual levies of men ... the wish for peace which was becoming a passion, all foreboded the fall of the Empire. The Royalists took advantage of this state of matters to prepare a

fresh effort, and in the spring of 1813 M. de la Tour was sent to Bordeaux by Louis XVIII. to invite M. de Tafford de Saint Germain to rally the party. M. de la Tour was also charged with a message to M. de la Rochejaquelein to say that the King counted on him for La Vendée. The latter lost no time in obeying. He went into Poitou, Anjou, and Touraine to consult with the survivors of the Vendean army in those parts, such as MM. de Baugé, Adrien de Laval and others. At Tours he had an affecting meeting with Ludovic de Charrette, son of the great general; he had heard that M. de la Rochejaquelein had arrived and came to see him, crying out: "I am Charrette, you are Rochejaquelein; we ought to be friends," and the elder "opened his heart" to the gallant youth and told him of all his projects.

In the autumn M. de la Rochejaquelein returned to his family at Citran, where a son was born to him on October 30th. A few days later, the Mayor of Bordeaux sent him a friendly warning that he was about to be taken up; he started at once for the town, but met the gendarmes on his way. Here again a friend saved him. "The officer who was in command recognised M. de la Rochejaquelein perfectly, but as he was not the actual bearer of the warrant of arrest, and was only present to assist the police officer, he let the Marquis pass: the carriage got stuck in the mud and the party only reached Citran late at night." Next morning the house was surrounded, and a minute and vexatious search, which included the sick lady's bedroom, was made for the absent master of the house.

The ministerial order was couched in strong terms.

"M. de la Rochejaquelein is to be taken dead or alive, conveyed by post, by day and night, and brought to the Ministry whenever he arrives, at whatever hour it may be." Poor Mme. de la Rochejaquelein's thoughts must have gone back many years to the time when Clisson was surrounded in the same manner. Her husband remained in hiding at Bordeaux, but managed to spend a few days at Citran in the following January, and later, unknown to the Government, he returned secretly to live there.

M. de la Rochejaquelein's one idea was to return to La Vendée and work for the King: "it seemed as if the heroic memory of his brother was calling him." His poor wife, her mother and the Abbé Jagault, one of the few survivors of the great war, tried hard to combat this wish. Presently the news that H.R.H. the Duc d'Angoulême had arrived at the Duke of Wellington's headquarters in Spain offered a new opening for M. de la Rochejaquelein's loyalty and he went to join him at St. Jean de Luz, after having prepared everything for a rising in Bordeaux as soon as the Prince should give the signal. Faithful to her old Vendean principles, his wife offered no opposition to his project. "I had only the strength," she says, "to beg of God to accept the last sacrifice we could make for the King."

She was rewarded by the happy arrival of the Prince at Bordeaux and the triumph, for the time, of the Royalist cause, but she did not assist at the entrance of the Prince into Bordeaux on March 12th, for this date was fraught with memories of the same day, now twenty-one years ago, when the white flag was first

raised in La Vendée to give the signal for the war which had brought such desolation to her and hers. "The memories of the past, the uncertain prospects of the future, her feelings of regret, fear and hope, plunged her for hours into a kind of stupor," says her biographer. Presently M. de la Rochejaquelein was sent by the Duc d'Angoulême to Calais to acquaint the King with the events which had taken place in the south. When Louis XVIII. heard the name of the envoy, he said these words, which were ever after treasured by our heroine: "It is to him that I owe the conduct of my good town of Bordeaux."

For a short time fortune smiled on the de la Rochejaqueleins, and our heroine was able to rejoice at seeing those for whom La Vendée had so greatly dared and suffered once more on the throne; but the reappearance of Napoleon, after the Hundred Days, changed everything. Once more Mme. de la Rochejaquelein was forced, at her husband's desire, to seek safety in Spain, and here she and her children awaited the result of M. de la Rochejaquelein's fresh efforts for the monarchy. This time, strange to say, she had more hopes than fears. She knew that Louis had obtained arms and ammunition from England, and that a general rising was preparing in the west. She was aware of, and deeply sympathised with, his loyal ambition (which had been that also of M. de Lescure years before) to reach Paris with a Vendean army before Europe should have declared war on Napoleon, and thus restore the throne of the Bourbons by the arms of La Vendée, without the intervention of strangers.

It was now the middle of June, 1815; only vague

rumours reached the exiles at San Sebastian of what was taking place in the west of France, and poor Mme. de la Rochejaquelein was still full of happy illusions when the second great sorrow of her life came upon her. One day General Espellata, who was in command of the Spanish garrison, asked to be admitted to see her to show her a list of French refugees who had sought shelter in Spain. He begged her to glance at the names to see if she knew any among them. Mme. de la Rochejaquelein at once perceived her relative M. de Menou's name, and asked to see him. Poor M. de Menou was in no haste to go to his cousin, for he had heard news of the tragedy in La Vendée, and that Louis de la Rochejaquelein, after showing a valour which recalled M. Henri to his faithful countrymen, had also fallen for the cause, having been shot by the Imperial troops on the 6th June near Mathes in the *Marais*.

M. de Menou found the unconscious widow in good spirits, as we have said, and feeling unable to break the truth to her at once, he strove to prepare her for it by talking of the vicissitudes of warfare and the uncertainty of the future, remarking that it was best to be resigned to whatever Providence should ordain. Mme. de la Rochejaquelein, with her true piety, replied that she hoped always to be resigned to God's will, but continued to talk with hope and joy of the future. It was a most pathetic scene, and in his extreme old age M. de Menou would recall it vividly.

At last, feeling unequal to the task of crushing his cousin's hopes for ever, he left her and sought Mgr. de Coucy, a French bishop who was also in exile, begging

him to undertake to break the news. He did so, but no details of this sad interview have come down to us, and we can but picture for ourselves the desolation which thus for a second time fell upon the life of Mme. de la Rochejaquelein.

Only a few days later the news—which would otherwise have been so joyful—of the Restoration reached the exiles, and although her own happiness was shattered, Mme. de la Rochejaquelein's duties to her children and her charity towards the survivors of La Vendée filled her life with unselfish interests, which brought consolation in their train. The King's government was not slow in showing honour to the family of the brave defenders of the royal rights, and our heroine's eldest son, Louis, was created a peer of France.

La Vendée also offered its tribute of sympathy and respect to the bereaved widow. In February, 1816, Cathelineau, the worthy son of the hero, and M. de Clabat, at her desire, removed her husband's remains from Perier, where he had been buried, to the family vault at Saint Aubin de Baubigné. The sad journey took five days. Wherever it passed, the funeral cortège found "La Vendée armed and in prayer, everywhere the sound of bells, the firing of guns, the chants of the priests, the laments of the women and children saluted the coffin." It happened more than once that the priest who pronounced the funeral oration had been himself a soldier before he received holy orders. At Bourbon Vendée the aged Abbé, formerly Count, Duchaffaud, who was eighty and who had been a soldier in Condé's army, touched his audience deeply,

for as he wept over Louis de la Rochejaquelein's bier, he shed tears also for his three brave sons, who had died in La Vendée for the same great cause. The peasants, who flocked in crowds to the obsequies of M. Henri's brother, said: "We have lost our support, our best friend—our father."

To these poor people Mme. de la Rochejaquelein became a mother, and the history of the rest of her life is entwined with theirs. The wars had left their usual legacy of misery to the people and to the land, miseries which the King was often unable to remedy. Our heroine devoted her money, her time, her influence to endeavour to send help and comfort. Throughout the fifteen years of the Restoration she begged continuously for the country of her adoption.

In eloquent words Cardinal Pie describes the life of charity led by her, and of which he was an eye-witness in her later years. "It was not enough for her," he says, "to send to the poor farmers all the money she had at her disposal after her family expenses had been provided for. No, there is to such as her little merit in giving what one has. She would do more; she condemned herself to work, to incessant work. She armed herself with knitting needle and spinning wheel with an energy I should call martial. From earliest dawn till a late hour in the evening, and this for over fifty years, she could be seen preparing woollen dresses, clothes for all ages or either sex—old men, women, new-born babes. She knew by heart the facts regarding each family. The history of each generation, the names and ages of the children . . . each piece of work, therefore, had its special destination, and in

MARQUISE DE LA ROCHEJAQUELEIN.

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spite of the cruel blindness that fell upon her, nothing could turn her from her occupations. While she dictated her long and charming letters, which were generally on behalf of La Vendée, her fingers were still engaged in work. While she told her delicious stories, which kept her family enthralled, she did not neglect her knitting, or at the most, in the heat of her narrative, she would thrust her needle through her thick white hair, only to begin her work again a moment later."

This portrait of Mme. de la Rochejaquelein brings her vividly before us, and shows her, we think, as she would best wish to be remembered, as the life-long friend and benefactress of the country she loved; but there is another and sadder aspect in which she appears —as the consoler of those Vendeans who, after the fourth and last fatal rising in 1832, under the impulse of the Duchesse de Berry, were imprisoned and brought to trial for their loyalty to the white flag.

About the time of the incident we are about to record Mme. de la Rochejaquelein lost her eldest son, Louis. This young man, faithful to his family traditions, took part in the short campaign in the west, and was wounded near his ancestral home of Clisson, now once more in ruins. To escape being arrested in France, he took refuge in Portugal, and entering the service of that country, met his death on September 5th, 1833, during an attack on the fortifications of Lisbon.

During the same year the trials of the Vendean loyalists took place at Orleans, and, as if in anticipation of the event, Mme de la Rochejaquelein had taken

up her residence in the city in order to be near two of her daughters, Mme de Chauvelin and Mme. de Mallet. When the poor peasant prisoners, some of whom still bore the marks of wounds received in the "great wars," reached Orleans, their benefactress, to use the words of a contemporary friend of hers, "met them on their arrival, comforted them in prison, supported them at their trial," and when, owing to the intrepidity of the jury, they were set free, they seemed more to value the privilege of kissing her hands while they shed tears of gratitude than that of liberty itself. "In the prisons where these poor people had been lodged before they reached Orleans they had been treated as assassins and robbers, so it was an inexpressible joy for them and an augury, as it were, of their rehabilitation when they saw Mme. de la Rochejaquelein, already advanced in years and nearly blind, enter their prison, supporting Mme. de Donnissan her mother, then very aged and quite blind, yet who wished to unite with her daughter in this pious duty, and with her to render a last homage to that Vendée whose first combats she had witnessed. Mme. de la Rochejaquelein led her mother, and was herself guided by her daughters, so that three generations of the family came to bind up the moral wounds of La Vendée in its suffering and humiliation."

One other tragedy brought Mme. de la Rochejaquelein before the world in this same fatal year: this was the death of the brave Cathelineau, whom she had looked upon almost as a son of her own, and who was shot, unarmed, at the moment he was endeavouring to protect a friend. Owing to her exertions and those of

M. de Civrac, who had been in arms with Cathelineau, a collection was made for the widow and orphans of this brave man. This was Mme. de la Rochejaquelein's "last campaign" in public for La Vendée, and she then returned to her quiet life of work for the destitute, which Cardinal Pie has described.

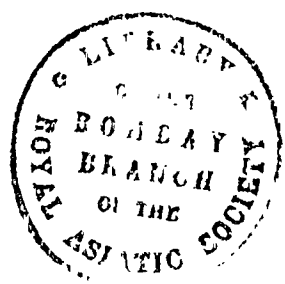
It was at Chartres, near which she then lived, that the prelate first knew the venerable lady and that a warm friendship grew up between them. When he became Bishop of Poitiers she continued to correspond with him, and would congratulate him on being at the head of a diocese, "whose faith I know, and whose good peasants sacrificed for their religion their lives and all they possessed"; and again, "how I would wish to receive your blessing in the midst of those good people, with whom I have longed to spend all the days of my life." The dear lady, says the Cardinal, in his beautiful funeral oration, "possessed the antique faith, the candid simplicity of the early ages, a spirit of prayer and habits of piety which were apparent even in her last words and last moments. Her heart, open to all by her charity, was for her children and friends a treasure of tenderness and devotedness." Such as these words portray her, such have we found Mme. de la Rochejaquelein during the course of her long life and in the midst of its deepest sorrows and dangers—a truly valiant woman, in spite of a naturally timid and fearful nature, which her devotion to those she loved turned to heroism.

Mme. de la Rochejaquelein died on February 15th, 1857, in the eighty-fifth year of her age, and according to the wishes expressed in her will, she was buried in

the family vault at Saint Aubin de Baubigné. Thus the remains of the great lover of La Vendée came back to rest in that country, and the occasion was a memorable one. The people came *en masse* to honour the well-loved name. "All La Vendée in its military and aristocratic character assisted at the funeral, wept at the panegyric," but still more was it a demonstration on the part of the people of love and honour for the memory of their true mother.

And here on her grave we, too, must lay this slight tribute to the heroine of La Vendée.

THE END.



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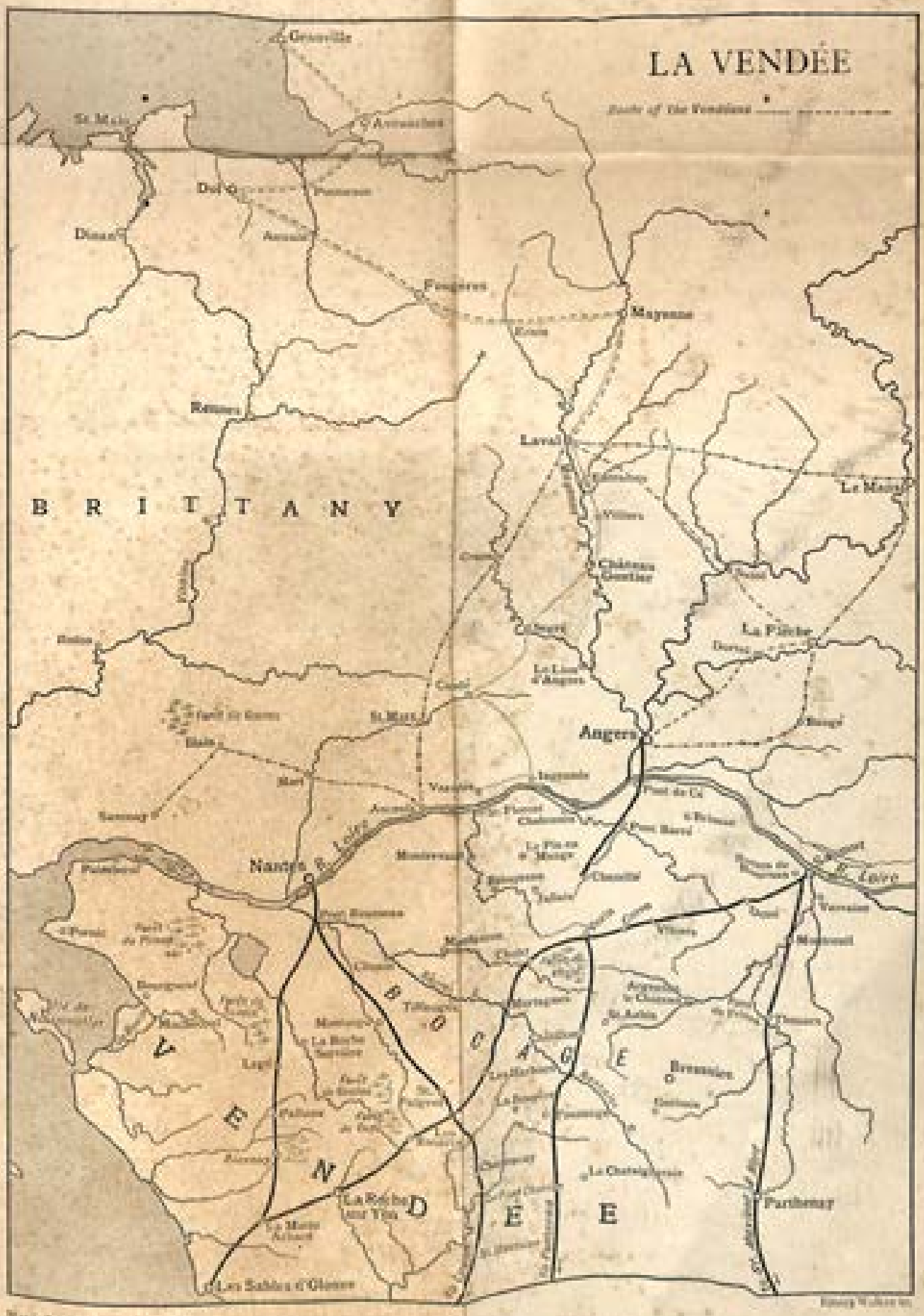
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Pontorson
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Rennes
Laval
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BRITTANY
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